Tommie

FROM TOMBOY TO EXECUTIVE

By Donna L. Reynolds

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Indianapolis, Indiana

Cover Photo: Dorothy Mae "Tommie" Cole with her parents,
Bertha Alice Cravens and Charles Wesley Cole, circa 1914.

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Letter To The Reader

The life of Dorothy Mae Cole Walker Anderson was an inspiration to all of us who knew her personally. She was a unique individual who always went by the affectionate nickname of "Tommie." The beloved matriarch of our family, she was a great friend to many people from all phases and walks of life; an eager, can-do volunteer who became a respected community leader; and the founder of a successful business that continues to thrive today, 75 years after she founded it.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I have a biased viewpoint. I never had to look far to find a good role model for my life. Tommie was my grandmother, and I loved and adored her, just as my sister and four first cousins did. She is part of my earliest childhood memories, and I was able to enjoy her company frequently right up until her death in 1992, when I was thirty-four years old. She lived to see the company become an international success and her grandchildren grown to be adults with children of their own. And, she was able to witness the beginning of the urban renaissance of her beloved Indianapolis community. What a life she lived!

For whatever reason you decided to pick up this book, I hope you will read on. If you do, I think you will enjoy it and learn from it. I know I did. Tommie's life demonstrates the power of the human spirit and the ability of ordinary

people to make an extraordinary difference. More than anything, for me, this book shows how much of her spirit still exists in the fabric and culture of our company. Many of her experiences are still relevant and applicable to my life, our business and the world in which we live. All of us who work for the company today owe a debt of gratitude for what Tommie created and left for us to nurture and grow.

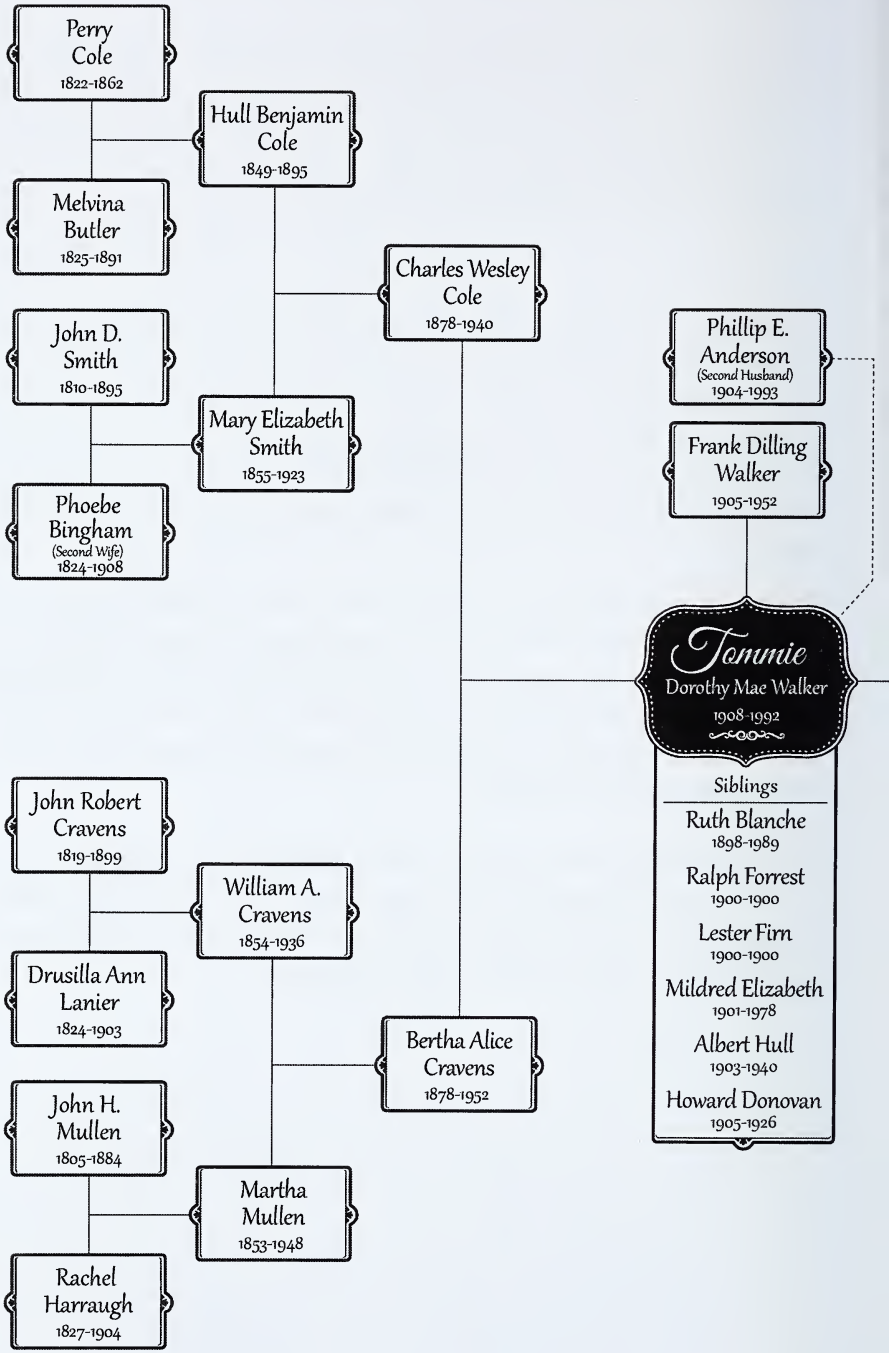
Finally, and speaking of gratitude, this book would not exist if it were not for Tommie's younger son (and my father), Frank D. Walker, Jr. Frank had the vision and energy to take this project from concept to completion. He also had the wisdom to employ Donna Reynolds as our researcher and writer. I would just like to thank my dad and Donna for giving all of us the gift of this book. Now the generations that follow can get to know, learn from and celebrate the purposeful and well-lived life of the unique woman who went by the name "Tommie."

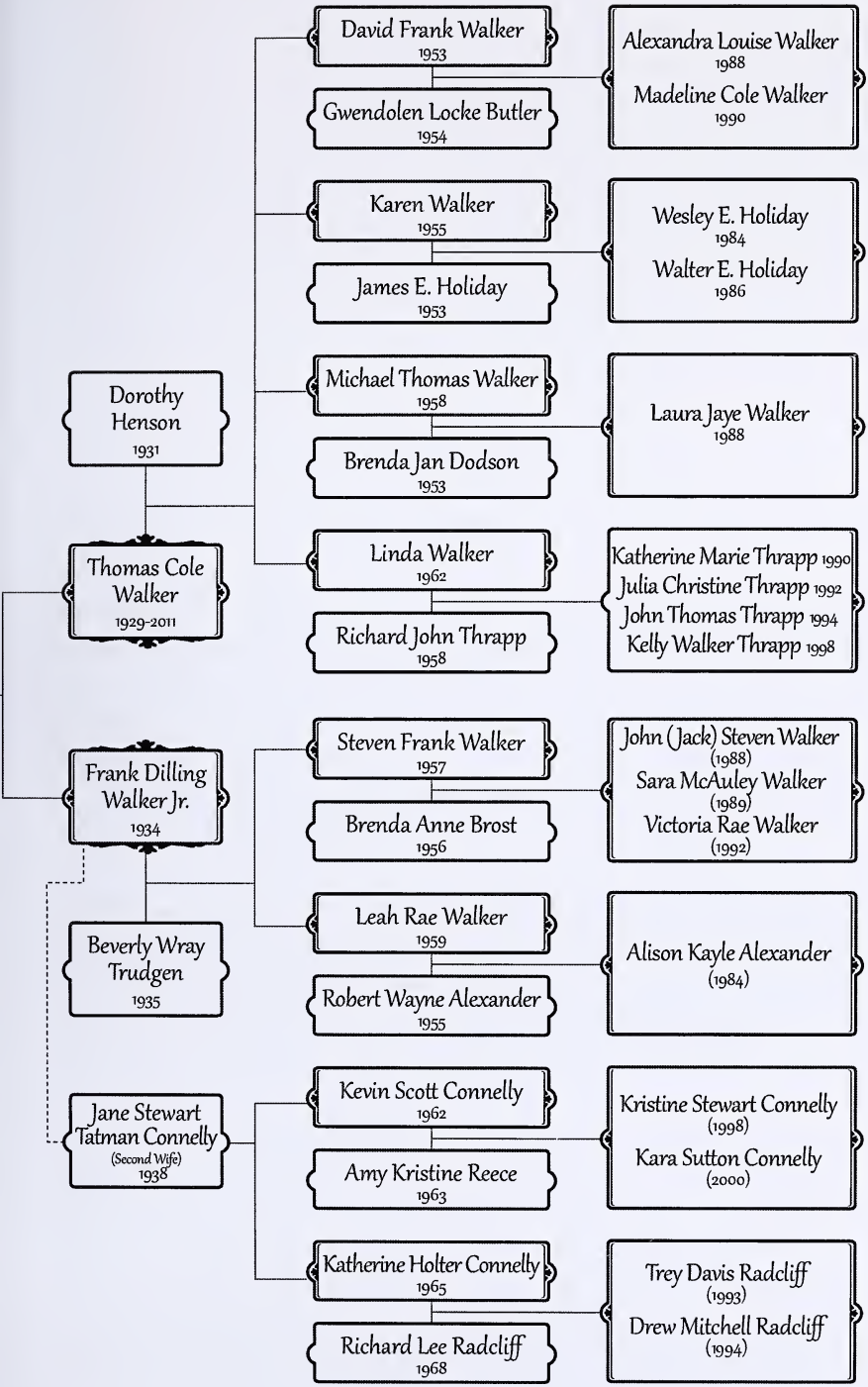
Steve Walker, Chairman and CEO
Walker

Family Tree

Tommie strongly believed in a "Family First" philosophy. She was respectful and grateful to those in her family who came before her and instilled strong values and provided opportunities. She also truly loved and cherished her family in the present, and always put them first. And she held great hope for the future of her family, for she knew they would be the ones to carry on her philosophy on life and business.

The following pages detail Tommie's family tree, going back three generations to her great-grandparents and forward three generations to her great-grandchildren. You can use the family tree as a helpful guide to reference the family members mentioned throughout the book.


Perry Cole
1822-1862
Hull Benjamin Cole
1849-1895
Melvina Butler
1825-1891
Charles Wesley Cole
1878-1940
John D. Smith
1810-1895
Mary Elizabeth Smith
1855-1923
Phoebe Bingham
(Second Wife)
1824-1908
Phillip E. Anderson
(Second Husband)
1904-1993
Frank Dilling Walker
1905-1952
Tommie
Dorothy Mae Walker
1908-1992
Siblings
Ruth Blanche
1898-1989
Ralph Forrest
1900-1900
Lester Firn
1900-1900
Mildred Elizabeth
1901-1978
Albert Hull
1903-1940
Howard Donovan
1905-1926
John Robert Cravens
1819-1899
William A. Cravens
1854-1936
Drusilla Ann Lanier
1824-1903
Bertha Alice Cravens
1878-1952
John H. Mullen
1805-1884
Martha Mullen
1853-1948
Rachel Harraugh
1827-1904


David Frank Walker
1953
Gwendolen Locke Butler
1954
Alexandra Louise Walker
1988
Madeline Cole Walker
1990
Karen Walker
1955
James E. Holiday
1953
Wesley E. Holiday
1984
Walter E. Holiday
1986
Dorothy Henson
1931
Michael Thomas Walker
1958
Brenda Jan Dodson
1953
Laura Jaye Walker
1988
Thomas Cole Walker
1929-2011
Linda Walker
1962
Richard John Thrapp
1958
Katherine Marie Thrapp 1990
Julia Christine Thrapp 1992
John Thomas Thrapp 1994
Kelly Walker Thrapp 1998
Frank Dilling Walker Jr.
1934
Steven Frank Walker
1957
Brenda Anne Brost
1956
John (Jack) Steven Walker
(1988)
Sara McAuley Walker
(1989)
Victoria Rae Walker
(1992)
Beverly Wray Trudgen
1935
Leah Rae Walker
1959
Robert Wayne Alexander
1955
Alison Kayle Alexander
(1984)
Jane Stewart Tatman Connelly
(Second Wife)
1938
Kevin Scott Connelly
1962
Amy Kristine Reece
1963
Kristine Stewart Connelly
(1998)
Kara Sutton Connelly
(2000)
Katherine Holter Connelly
1965
Richard Lee Radcliff
1968
Trey Davis Radcliff
(1993)
Drew Mitchell Radcliff
(1994)

Introduction

When Dorothy Mae "Tommie" Cole was born in 1908, the industry in which she made her mark didn't actually exist, although it was incubating. Nothing in her birthplace (a farm in central Indiana), her birth order (the youngest of seven), her education (a high school diploma), her socioeconomic circumstances (modest at best), or her work experience (selling handkerchiefs in a department store) prepared her for the professional life she chose or the remarkable things she achieved.

No, she was just born to it. She came from a stock of tenacious, hardworking people, some of them natural leaders; was reared by loving parents in a close-knit family; imbued with intellectual curiosity, a benign yet acute sense of humor, and a vast reservoir of human kindness; and gifted with the ability to draw people out and then, most important of all, to listen to them.

Tommie Cole Walker happened upon the market research profession by happenstance and grabbed hold of it with absolute determination. She pioneered new methods of garnering and verifying data and rather than protect her intellectual capital, she shared it freely with the industry. Even when she relied completely on the success of her business for her livelihood, she never put it first. That position belonged to her family. Community came second. And still, she built a nationally recognized, highly respected company

from her kitchen table up that fed her, her family and many more.

She didn't believe she did anything special. She liked people so well, she said, that she didn't know she was working. Her unshakable self-confidence sustained her through slammed doors, personal insults, meetings with skeptical executives, financial crises, and crushing personal loss.

"Did I ever consider throwing in the towel?" she asked rhetorically. "I can't emphasize this enough: no, never, never, never. You just have to believe in yourself and what you're doing. And not be a quitter."

That was one thing Tommie was not – a quitter. Generous, kind, witty, industrious, enthusiastic, charming, gutsy, honest, delightful, loving, ethical, intelligent, genuine, busy, loyal, benevolent, optimistic, energetic, pioneering, inspirational, trusting, fun, real. These are the words people who knew her used to describe her. And beloved. Very clearly beloved.

All this and much more contributed to Tommie Walker's success in business and in life. Somehow, looking back, it just seems inevitable that she would have such a story. As one member of her family said, "She was so interested in other people – it was just who she was. No wonder she started a company in market research."

Chapter One

The Farm And The Formative Years

The little girl staring, wide-eyed and unsmiling, into the camera in an early twentieth-century, sepia photograph resembles other little girls of her time. One small hand resting on a shoulder of each of her parents seated in front of her, she looks both innocent and mature, protected and protecting. A large bow is tied in her blond, bowl-cut hair, and her dark, long-sleeved frock is double-buttoned up to her throat, where the slightest edge of a pale undergarment peeks out above the Peter Pan collar.

The collar style received its name in 1905, when it appeared in the design of a costume for the play *Peter and Wendy* in New York. Its popularity had worked its way to the Midwest by the time the little girl in the photograph, Dorothy Mae Cole, was born on May 22, 1908, on a farm in southern Tipton County, Indiana. So her dress, perhaps her Sunday best, judging by the coat and tie her father was wearing and the white ruffled blouse on her mother, might well have been a hand-me-down.

Passing clothing down through a large family was nothing at all uncommon on thrifty Midwest farms then, and Dorothy Mae Cole would have been a prime recipient. Her parents, Bertha Alice Cravens and Charles Wesley Cole, had had seven children, and she was the youngest.

For girls born in 1908 in the United States, the most popular names were, in descending order, Mary, Helen, Margaret, Ruth, Anna, Dorothy, Elizabeth, Mildred, Alice, and Marie. Dorothy may have been a common name, but early on, it was not favored by the Cole's youngest child. By the time she appeared in the photograph, she had probably already acquired the nickname she preferred for the rest of her life: Tommie.

Many years later, after the girl with the common name had matured into a most uncommon and successful woman, Tommie would spend scores of hours recording her memories with Nancy Hunt, a trusted employee, and with her granddaughter Leah Walker. In those sessions, she related how she got her nickname: "Out on the farm, they said every time we hitched up the horse I was there to get on the horse. Or, every time I heard an engine run, the old car or any machinery, I was always there or out in the field, wanting to act pretty boyish." She followed her father everywhere, according to family lore, and it was he who, teasing her about her tomboyish behavior, began calling her Tommie. The name stuck, and she was never again called Dorothy.

Farm life and the energy it required came naturally to Tommie: it was in her blood. Understanding how it got there requires a brief review of her lineage.

In 1858, Tommie's paternal great-grandparents, Perry and Malvina Butler Cole, and their children left Switzerland County, Indiana, just below Cincinnati on the Ohio River, and moved upstate to Tipton County's Prairie Township, settling four miles north of the hamlet of Normanda. Tipton County, established in 1844, had been occupied by members of the Miami and Delaware tribes until the 1830s and was one of Indiana's last counties to be settled. It was still sparsely populated when the Cole family arrived and began farming.

Four years later, in 1862, Perry Cole died, leaving his widow, Malvina, and their twelve-year-old son, Hull Benjamin Cole, to provide for the family. Hull remained in the township into adulthood and married Mary Elizabeth

Smith, a daughter of John D. Smith and his second wife, Phoebe McFarlin. Hull was acquiring a father-in-law of some note.

John D. Smith was among the earliest Tipton County pioneers and became one of the most prominent. A natural-born leader, he was described in the county history *Tipton County: Her Land and People*, as, "...one of the most valuable men in the history of the county and township. John D. Smith was noted for good business qualities and unusual energy."

Reared on a farm, which he managed beginning when he was just thirteen years old after his father died, John was the first at many things. He built both the first hewed log dwelling and the first brick house in the township, was one of the first farmers in the area to grow wheat and apply scientific methods to his orchard, and was credited with raising, in 1840, the first American flag in Tipton County. Active in his community and lauded for his sound business sense, he was able to accumulate and maintain one of the most valuable estates in the county at that time.

John and Phoebe had six children, including a daughter, Mary Elizabeth, who grew up and married Hull Benjamin Cole, son of the first Coles in Tipton County. Their union blended two farm families who, through personal experience, knew what it took to press on in the face of untimely deaths and to prosper through hard manual labor.

Just twenty years after the first Coles arrived in Indiana, Hull and Mary Cole's son Charles Wesley was born on June 19, 1878. Six months and two days later, another baby arrived in the county – Bertha Alice Cravens, the daughter of William Cravens and his wife, Martha Mullen. Bertha started life with an impressive heritage: One great-grandfather helped finance the Civil War effort from his own private funds, and another founded two towns and served as an Indiana state senator. The family was now of more modest means and, like Charles Wesley Cole, Bertha was reared on a farm.

In 1898, with the clerk of the circuit court in the neighboring county officiating, Bertha and Charles Wesley, known as Wes, were married.

The young couple had more than a farming background in common. For generations, pioneering, persevering people filled their family trees; people who held and passed down a strong work ethic, traditional values, and loyalty to family and community.

In time, the newlyweds would make sure the next generation followed in those footsteps. And one day, they would pose for a photo, wearing their Sunday best, with their youngest daughter, Tommie. Their solemn little girl stood behind them, her small hands gathering them into a family.

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When Wes and Bertha were merely infants, N. W. Ayer & Son, later called the oldest advertising agency in the United States, was serving as midwife for a different kind of birth in Philadelphia. In his authoritative book *Honomichl on Marketing Research* (1986), Jack Honomichl recounts the historic event: "Use of original marketing research by an advertising agency to gain a new account popped up as early as 1879. N. W. Ayer & Son was soliciting the Nichols-Shepard Co, manufacturer of agricultural machinery. Ayer prepared a media schedule that was challenged by the would-be client, according to L. C. Lockley writing in the Journal of Marketing for April 1950. Substantiation came from an Ayer survey of state officials and publishers throughout the country asking for information on grain production and media circulation by counties. The client was impressed and Ayer got the account."

It seems especially fitting that the business in which Tommie would one day be an innovator began with farm-related research, in the year her parents were just learning to walk.

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Her parents, Charles Wesley Cole and Bertha Alice Cravens, were just nineteen years old when they married on January 12, 1898. It was a Wednesday, considered a lucky day for weddings and, in an old, early American rhyme, described as "best of all" the days of the week to wed. Their first daughter,

Ruth, was born the same year the couple married, and two years later, in the first year of a new century, Bertha gave birth to twin sons, Ralph and Lester. But the boys lived only four months: perhaps even then and certainly years later, no one knew what caused their untimely death.

Other children quickly came along: Mildred, nicknamed Mid, in 1901; Albert Hull, who went by his middle name, in 1903; Howard, known as Mike, in 1905; and finally Dorothy Mae, soon to be Tommie, in 1908. The state and society into which the Cole children were born was dramatically different from the one in which Tommie would one day thrive. A surrey drawn by two horses traveled only twenty-five miles in four hours, scarlet fever could ravage a town, and the lynching in Indiana of two African American men before a trial took place was described by a contemporary as having been conducted by "a mob of good citizens." Money was hard to come by, but even a modest amount could make a vast difference in a household: one diarist of the era noted that with a $90 inheritance her mother was able to purchase rugs, a jacket, and silver flatware.

But things were changing rapidly in Tipton County. Perhaps one of the most dramatic was travel. In 1901, three rail lines operated through Tipton, Indiana, just a few miles from the Cole farm, with service from Indianapolis to Peru by way of Tipton and Kokomo. Several times a day residents could board cars to other Hoosier towns.

Education and communication were advancing, too. On October 14, 1902, the cornerstone was laid in Tipton for a library building at the corner of Madison and Independence Streets. One of more than 2,500 libraries funded, at least in part, by Andrew Carnegie, between 1883 and 1929, it was completed in 1903 and overseen by the same librarian for 41 years. In 1905, rural mail routes were established, making possible the delivery of daily newspapers around the county. The first telephones were being installed in rural homes, although customers had to erect the poles for the lines themselves.

In 1907, Bertha and Wes Cole and their children attended a family gathering at the large brick house built in the previous century by Wes's grandfather,

John Smith. Posing for a photograph, about 50 adults and children were arrayed around Phoebe McFarlin Smith, who was seated in a large wicker chair and looking like the matriarch she was no doubt considered. Among the little girls in the front row were Ruth and Mid Cole. The following year, they had a new baby sister.

When Tommie was born on May 22, 1908, the United States population stood at just under 87 million people. The life expectancy for a newborn girl in the U.S. was nearly fifty-three years, a number affected by the infant mortality rate. Deaths recorded in Indiana that year were primarily from consumption (tuberculosis), pneumonia, typhoid fever, cancer, and diphtheria, although two fatal cases of smallpox were reported and 140 deaths by violence were on the books. What was striking was that 14 percent of all deaths were of children under one year of age.

In the seventeen states and few separate cities judged by the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, to be reporting reliable figures, 1908 was a year of "remarkably low" mortality, a fact in Tommie's favor, perhaps. But even so, stated the Bureau's report, "Nearly one-fifth of all of the deaths that occurred were those of infants under 1 year of age, and over one-fourth are of children less than 5 years of age." In the U.S., well over 136,000 infants under one year old died in 1908, 19.7 percent of total deaths. Statistically, Tommie was born with a one in five chance of not seeing her first birthday.

That level of risk outraged Professor Irving Fisher of Yale University, who in writing at the time for the Bureau of Census, concluded, "Of all the diseases of infancy (having median age 1), 47 percent may be prevented," and he called for action to reduce the high infant mortality rate. His outrage illustrated a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo that spurred developments in a nation striving to pull itself out of the nineteenth century and firmly into the twentieth.

The year Tommie was born ushered in what would become icons of the twentieth century. For the very first time in New York City's Times Square,

the ball dropped on New Year's Eve, heralding the new year. The first passenger airplane flight occurred just days before Tommie was born, and during her first summer, Henry Ford's company built its inaugural Model T car. While it was true that, on March 7, Cincinnati Mayor Mark Breith stood before the city council and announced that "women are not physically fit to operate automobiles," the fourth International Congress of Women opened in Amsterdam just a few months later with women's rights as the primary topic.

The year of Tommie's birth was also a presidential election year, and popular incumbent President Theodore Roosevelt, honoring a promise not to seek a third term, persuaded the Republican Party to nominate William Howard Taft to become his successor. Taft handily defeated William Jennings Bryan.

Among those born the same year as Tommie Cole were actors James Stewart, Bette Davis, and Rex Harrison; journalist Edward R. Murrow; feminist Simone de Beauvoir; industrialist, politician, and philanthropist Nelson Rockefeller; and a Texan named Lyndon Johnson, who would become the thirty-sixth president of the United States. The twenty-second president, Grover Cleveland, died that year, and so did outlaw Butch Cassidy, or so people said.

This, then, was the world into which Tommie was born. As a preschooler in rural Indiana, she was completely unaware that, hundreds of miles away, the field in which she would one day be a pioneer and leader was getting a foothold. By 1910, however, the "evidences of market research became frequent enough to indicate that a new field of business activity had made a serious start," according to L. C. Lockley, although probably no more than $50,000 was spent in gathering marketing information that year.

In 1911, J. George Frederick started what may have been the first business research company, the Business Bourse. Among his early clients were General Electric and the Texas Company. And that same year, the Bureau of Business

Research at the Harvard Graduate School of Business, and the Commercial Research Division of the Curtis Publishing Company, headed by Charles C. Parlin, were both established.

Back in Tipton County, Indiana, market research was occurring informally and without a name. Tommie was witnessing it on a regular basis. She recounted those days in a speech to a milk industry convention in the 1960s this way: "While market research was unknown at that time, my parents were confronted with giving their opinion as they traveled by horse and carriage to the corner general store to sell their produce to Aggie, the owner's wife and clerk, who used to count the eggs and weigh the cream bucket while she would be asking my mother how she liked the new barrel crackers bought the week before, or how did the bright new gay calico yard goods come through washing in the homemade strong lye soap – which was all of a way in determining how many barrels of crackers or bolts of calico to re-order the next time when the city slicker salesman came through from Chicago.

"My father wasn't overlooked either, for out in front of the store on a bench, or on a cold day, standing around the pot-belly stove, the men folk would discuss politics, mostly about the president and his cabinet, or the price of milk, because this was long before television was known as a speaking member of every household's living room. And sometimes we would have to sit in the carriage and wait for the discussion to sorta come to an important decision point like 'would it really be better to stop milking so many cows when feed was so high and milk prices so low?'"

Later in life, Tommie recalled while talking with a reporter, "As a child living on a farm, I remember riding along in an open buggy with my grandparents to McCraw's general store in Tetersburg, Indiana – population fifty – and Grandpa sitting out front on a log bench where he could also watch his horse, old Topsy, should an automobile go by and frighten her. The conversation went something like this: 'Who you goin' to vote for next time, Wes?' Inside, my grandmother was selling her eggs in exchange for oil for the lamps. There, too, was a salesman from Sears, Roebuck in Chicago asking my grandmother which patterns of calico she liked best."

The largely agrarian society in which Tommie spent her early childhood was defined by experiences such as these. Daily life required careful attention to the family budget and hard work outdoors. Children were expected to pitch in, and Tommie was not exempt. She once told an audience, "We had milking cows. We sold skimmed milk and cream – we separated them and, my, in those days we didn't have electric milk-washing machines, and as a child, I found myself wondering why we had cows and sold milk when I had to wash all those big milk pails and containers through so many rinses."

And yet there was also time for leisure. County fairs were popular summer events throughout most the 1910s, reaching large numbers of people and propelling agricultural progress. Noted the Tipton County history, "Crowding the family into a buggy or wagon for a trip to the fair was an activity that for those in outlying townships began before dawn and extended until well after sundown.

"From 1910-1913, popular county horse shows claimed annual attention; prizes were awarded and the occasion was colorful. County-wide participation was brought about through class entries, and county and out-of-county participants joined the spectacular parade of bands and gala fanfare. Then followed for several years the corn shows, which featured exhibits and the annual dinner with an outstanding speaker. The meals were prepared by women of the various churches. With the demise of the corn show the county resorted to celebrations on Decoration Day [Memorial Day] and the Fourth of July."

The Cole family might well have attended such fairs and agricultural events. On their farm, however, the children had to entertain themselves. Little Tommie liked to play make-believe with her brothers Hull and Mike, pretending that various parts of the property were California or New York (two places she probably expected never to visit). Being the youngest, she said, "I was always the one that had to sit still and be California or New York while they ran around and did all the action. Or at a ballgame or something, I was the least important at everything."

But around the dinner table, Cole family members were on equal footing. "When I grew up, with a great big family, we all sat down at the table at the same time. My father always returned thanks. We didn't leave the table unless we were excused. It wasn't deep discipline. It didn't feel that way. It was that you saved everything good and everything bad to tell at the dinner table," Tommie told her granddaughter. Her father's saying grace would have been in keeping with the family's values. As Tommie pointed out, "In my household, we went to a country church most of the time. My father was district superintendent and would go visit other churches. We had the minister and his family for dinner most every Sunday."

By the time Tommie entered grade school, the first hospital in her home county had been built (although it operated for only a short time) and the Tipton County school system was well established. The county history reported that for the 1916-17 school year, for instance, there were, "3250 students, 119 teachers, 46 one-room district school buildings, 8 graded schools, several up-to-date district school buildings, high schools at Tipton, Windfall, Sharpsville, Kempton, Goldsmith and Curtisville, and parochial schools conducted by the Lutheran and Catholic Churches."

Tommie would have walked to a one-room grade school no more than one and a half miles from her home, although her middle school, likely in Sharpsville, was about four miles away. For that journey she sometimes caught a ride in a horse-drawn wagon or buggy with a neighboring farm boy her age named John Burkhart, whose family had returned to Indiana to live with his grandfather when John's father, a minister, suffered failing health. A year before John graduated from Tipton High School at the age of fifteen, his father died. John went on to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, but returned each summer to help on his grandfather's farm, milking cows and feeding pigs.

John Burkhart eventually moved to Indianapolis, founded insurance companies, served in key community leadership roles and, in 1966, shared

the stage with Tommie when they both received the annual management award from the Indianapolis Chapter of the Society for the Advancement of Management.

But in the 1910s, neither John nor Tommie would have been thinking about management awards. They were not yet teenagers when the country entered World War I. On April 11, 1917, just a month before Tommie's ninth birthday, according to the county history, "...a stirring patriotic program attracted an audience of 2,000 to the Martz Theatre [in Tipton]. At the close of the program...about 40 young men came forward and amid much applause lined themselves up on the stage. This group became the nucleus of the volunteers who mustered into service 13 days later as Company I, 1st Indiana Infantry... Many community dinners, programs, and other festivities were held to honor these servicemen." Several more public dinners and other events preceded the troops' leaving for WW I.

In December that year, the Tipton County Food Administration Board was set up to alert citizens to the need for food conservation and to publish and administer food regulations established by the state and federal food administration boards in support of the war. Grocers were required to report weekly on sales of sugar, flour, and substitutes, and clubs were formed to preserve food.

As the Tipton County history described the time, "Agricultural war work began early. The day after World War I was declared, a group of Tipton County farmers met in the county courthouse to make plans for increasing grain acreage and yields. They encouraged war gardens for food to replace wheat and meat, so much in demand for feeding the armies."

As if food rationing and a push to feed the troops fighting overseas wasn't enough of a strain, Spanish flu struck in 1918, creating a global epidemic that eventually killed an estimated 50 million people. Of the 4,000 Hoosier soldiers who died in World War I, 1600 were listed as having succumbed to influenza or pneumonia. In Indiana, the State Board of Health ordered all public places closed. The severity of the epidemic was unprecedented and would have not

been lost on the Cole family and the community in which they lived.

The U.S. National Archives painted this graphic picture: "One fifth of the world's population was attacked by this deadly virus. Within months, it had killed more people than any other illness in recorded history... Some victims died within hours of their first symptoms. Others succumbed after a few days; their lungs filled with fluid and they suffocated to death...The flu afflicted over 25 percent of the U.S. population. In one year, the average life expectancy in the United States dropped by 12 years."

No records or interviews relate how the pandemic affected the Cole family: they were lucky to all emerge from it alive. Nor is there any evidence that they took much note when, in 1919, the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote. But it was another sign of changing times, of the increasing influence of women and, had she been attuned to it, a signpost for young Tommie. The doors to opportunity were gradually opening, and one day, she would walk right through.

Chapter Two

Founding Walker And Finding Her Niche

In the 1920s, while Tommie Cole was studying her lessons in school, pioneers in the field she would one day enter were learning a thing or two themselves. Market research was still a toddling science, but it was growing steadier on its feet all the time. According to *Honomichl on Marketing Research*, "Some of the more familiar pioneer names in research started to flourish in the 1920s. Dr. Daniel Starch, for instance, first used the recognition method for measuring readership of advertisements and editorial content in magazines and newspapers in 1922.

"Dr. George Gallup also got into advertising readership measurements in 1923, but he is probably best known today for the Gallup Poll, which was first published in 35 newspapers in 1935 and promptly got him denounced as a 'charlatan,' a fate that also befell such other pioneer pollsters as Elmo Roper and Archibald Crossley...

"A young man by the name of Arthur C. Nielsen entered the marketing research field in 1923. He, in effect, invented the concept of share of market, which has held business executives spellbound ever since; they've spent more to get at that than for anything else in the marketing information field."

While these developments were taking place within her own country, for

Tommie they may as well have been occurring on Mars. She was just entering her teens, there were farm chores to do, and besides, information didn't travel quickly or easily. Radio stations throughout the United States were only beginning to transmit, although their proliferation would soon provide a new medium for advertisers and, as a result, a heightened interest in demographics. And that interest would change Tommie's life.

Change was just what the Cole family was undertaking in the early part of the 1920s. In 1922, when Tommie was a few months shy of her fourteenth birthday, her father sold the Tipton County homestead and, with Bertha, moved the family fifty miles south to Indianapolis. U.S. Highway 31, the direct route from the farm to the state capital, was still a gravel road in Tipton County, and only intermittent stretches of it had been paved through Hamilton County, which lay between the two home sites. The Coles moved in February, the same month that the *Readers Digest* published its first magazine, Al Jolson's "April Showers" was the number one song in the country, and President Warren G. Harding introduced the radio to the White House.

News of the day underscored how radically different this century would be from the previous one. Annie Oakley, star of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, a vestige of the American frontier, set a women's record by breaking 100 clay targets in a row. But in Europe, the targets were larger and the shots were about to turn deadly: Hitler and Mussolini were gaining power in their respective countries and setting the stage for a second world war. History would soon repeat itself: just as during World War I, farmers like Wes Cole again would be called on to feed troops battling abroad, and citizens would be required to observe food rationing.

In the twenty years leading up to World War II, more than a quarter of the U.S. population still resided on farms, although the numbers were steadily dropping as farming grew more efficient and people migrated to cities for employment. Wes Cole had been successful as a farmer, but it wasn't necessarily a career of his choosing. He had been pressed into the profession as a teenager when his father, Hull Benjamin Cole, died unexpectedly at the age of forty-five of what was diagnosed as inflammation of the brain. Described in an obituary

as "a kind husband, an indulgent father, and an excellent neighbor who was charitable and accommodating," Hull was held "in high esteem as a man and a good citizen." He was exceptional in his part of the country because he "at one time visited the European countries and had an extensive knowledge of the manner and customs of the people of many countries."

Wes was only seventeen when his father died. Although he spent a year at Marion Normal, a small Indiana college, he had to return home to run the farm and help look after his mother and two younger siblings. He'd been there ever since.

Now, in 1922, Wes was forty-four, a middle-aged man with five children who had spent all his adult life farming, but who certainly had heard his father's stories of a larger world and perhaps envied his father's eye-opening if temporary escape from rural life. Whether it was due to midlife crisis, or a financial incentive, or the desire to give his children more options in an urban area, Wes in any event decided it was time to create his own destiny. When the opportunity for a white-collar job in Indianapolis presented itself – one that apparently would allow him to exchange the hard physical labor of farming for a more intellectual management role – he took it.

Recalling the family's migration many years later, Tommie said, "The move to Indianapolis, in my father's eyes, was a big promotion in life. Instead of being a farmer all his life, he had a chance to work with farmers. He'd go out and tell them to ship their livestock to market in Indianapolis and Chicago by train…"

The exact nature of that "chance" is uncertain, but what soon transpired is not: The business opportunity folded almost immediately, the promise of it never materialized, and Wes Cole, who had purchased a house at 2258 North New Jersey Street in Indianapolis and had a family to support, was left to find another source of income. He tried selling insurance, part time, and, Tommie later recalled, "It took him quite a while to build up a business… my two brothers worked with my dad and they all wore white shirts. My mother would have twenty-four or twenty-five shirts to iron."

The next few years proved to be difficult ones for the Cole family. Returning to their previous way of life was impossible, and their adjustment to an urban existence was impeded by Wes's struggles to establish steady, reliable income. Loss, financial worries and family tragedy soon added to the household woes.

Shortly after they moved to Indianapolis, Wes's mother died. Tommie's fond memories included overnight stays at her grandmother's house and a humorous anecdote: "She'd say, 'Don't let them call you Tommie. That's an ugly name. That's a boy's name. When you go to the big city to live, don't you dare let them call you Tommie.'" But of course she did.

Attention soon turned to Ruth, the oldest of the Cole children and a college graduate, who had married her school sweetheart, Everett (Cy) Orr, in 1918. In 1921 she had given birth to a son, Kenny. Cy didn't want children and clarified the point by delivering his wife and infant son to the Cole house in Indianapolis and abandoning them there. The couple eventually divorced, and in March 1924, Cy remarried. When Cy died at the age of fifty, Kenny wasn't even mentioned in the obituary as a survivor – yet another indication of his strong aversion to fatherhood.

For the Cole family, Ruth's misfortunes would have been a hard pill to swallow. The divorce rate in Indiana in 1922 was only about 1 percent, and at that, it was the ninth-highest divorce rate in the nation. Even though divorce rates were climbing around the country following World War I, the vast majority of adults were married, and single-parent households were rare. That their eldest daughter, along with her son, was both abandoned by her husband and divorced put Wes and Bertha in a tiny minority of parents their age. It made them an anachronism in their church community, as well. But despite whatever private heartache they felt, the close knit Cole family seemed to rally to support Ruth.

Soon after she returned with her infant son to Wes and Bertha's Indianapolis home, Ruth became bedridden with pleurisy and remained ill for over a year. Bertha took on the care of both her daughter and grandson, but she needed help. So Tommie, who had entered Shortridge High School in the autumn of

1922, shortened her school day and spent afternoons caring for Kenny. It was a full and lively house, with never fewer than seven or eight people gathered around the dinner table.

Mid Cole attended DePauw University for two years, and on March 15, 1924, married Bill Gaddis. Tommie, seven years younger than Mid and by then halfway through high school, was her sister's attendant, dressed in peacock blue.

In June 1926, Tommie graduated from Shortridge. She appeared on page ninety-two of the school yearbook between Albert Cohen, who wanted to be a pharmacist, and George Combs, described as having, "a god-like head full of lofty ambitions." Her entry read, "Dorothy Mae Cole. 'Tommie' is popular, pretty, and full of pep. Is always surrounded by a host of admiring friends. Some say that she is shy, but that applies only to her classroom career."

For her senior picture, Tommie wore a three-strand necklace that rested at her throat, just above her rounded neckline. Parted on the left and bobbed, her hair featured soft waves and a wisp of bangs. Her smile was faint, almost tentative, but she looked straight into the camera with a wide-eyed awareness and sense of who she was that immediately brought to mind the little girl photographed with her parents back in Tipton only a dozen years earlier.

But in those years, Tommie Cole had grown up. The move from farm to city had certainly expanded her horizons. The hard realities within her family – a sister and nephew abandoned, a lost career opportunity and financial struggles for her father, the death of her grandmother – had been maturing factors.

And then there was the untimely death, on September 27, 1926, of her twenty-one-year-old brother Mike, whose ruptured appendix was misdiagnosed by the doctor. Her brother's friends came to pay their respects, more than two dozen of them lined up at the Cole family home, somber in their disbelief that a contemporary was gone so young. Tommie was struck by the trauma

the loss caused those around her, especially her father. And even though there had been other deaths in the family, Tommie found this one, of the brother who had been her playmate on the old farm, especially hard to understand and accept.

If she had been able to leave home that fall to attend college, Tommie might have buried her grief to focus on her studies. But as she later described the situation, "There just weren't dollars there at all to go to school." She had always had summer jobs while in high school, but now she had little choice other than to go to work full time.

The disappointment of being unable to get a college education would linger throughout her life. In her files, years later, she kept a newspaper article with the headline, "Success without a college degree." By that time, she had proven to herself and to the world that she could indeed succeed without that educational accomplishment, and she could be privately proud that she had overcome what she perceived as a deficit. But the disquieting feeling that having only a high school education left her somehow lacking in the company of other accomplished – and degreed – business leaders and academics never disappeared.

Freshly graduated from high school, Tommie found a position at H. P. Wasson and Company, an Indianapolis department store, as a sales clerk. The streetcar ran along Washington Street, where the store was located in the heart of the city, and riders needing change for the fare had a habit of ducking into Wasson's and heading to the nearest counter to secure it. There, in the handkerchief department on the first floor, newly hired Tommie Cole was eager to oblige such requests. Not knowing any other way to open the cash register so she could exchange bills for coins, she entered as sales the dollar amounts harried change-seekers gave her. Amazed at the resulting high, but seriously misrepresentative, revenue numbers, Tommie's supervisor reportedly exclaimed that the store had never made so much money in one day on hankies.

Learning the difference between making change and making a sale didn't take Tommie long: she was a quick study. Over the course of her adult life, she would exhibit time and again her ability to observe, analyze, assess, and act rapidly, taking in information and making good use of it. Perhaps that ability was at work when she met Frank Dilling Walker, whose family lived near hers. His father, who worked for the Dilling Candy Company, had named his son after his boss. Three years older than Tommie, Frank was thin, hardworking, and fun loving. He parted his dark hair in the middle and was a whiz with numbers. His outgoing personality won Tommie over.

Details about just how Tommie and Frank met and conducted their courtship are lost, but what ensued was classic romance with a practical touch. Tommie later told a reporter that because her family was "short on money, and I was in love, I got married." And then, to make sure the important point was clear, she declared, "I was never sorry."

Tommie was just twenty years old when she and Frank were married on September 22, 1928, at Broadway Methodist Church in Indianapolis. It was her family's church, where her parents volunteered in various capacities and where Tommie would, over the years, worship, volunteer, celebrate, and mourn. That day was clearly a happy one, but since money was tight, no professional photographer was hired to record the event.

Modest means didn't seem to worry Tommie at the time, although the wisdom acquired with age was reflected in what she later told her granddaughter: "We started off in a one-bedroom apartment when we should have stayed in somebody's back bedroom." More brightly, and with her characteristic way of laughing at herself, she once told a reporter, "We weren't smart enough to know that you couldn't get married and have a baby right away on $28 a week. So we did."

Their first child arrived just a year after the wedding, on September 29, 1929. The new parents agreed that Frank would choose the name this time

(Tommie could name their second born). He selected Thomas Cole Walker, in honor of his wife.

A month after they became parents, Tommie and Frank, like the rest of the nation, witnessed the great stock market crash that would become known as Black Tuesday. The crash, the most devastating in the history of the U.S., signaled the beginning of the Great Depression. Remarkably, Frank Walker, who was working at American National Bank, retained his job through the Depression, and Tommie, a new mom at age twenty-one, remained at home.

Her sister Mid now had two young daughters, Billilou and Nancy, and a husband who was out of work. Sometime in 1930 or 1931, Mid, her husband, Bill, and the girls moved in with Frank, Tommie and the baby, remaining about a year until Bill found work and the family was able to get back on their feet. Tommie's generosity in helping her sister through a difficult time was not surprising: Tommie was already developing a habit and a reputation for being both generous and unpretentious.

Billilou's first and lasting impressions of her aunt were overwhelmingly positive. "She was a very good example as a person – you'd think, 'I'd like to be like her,' with her upstanding values that rubbed off and stuck with you."

Her memories of the year the two families lived together were limited, but Billilou knew that during the Depression, two women in the family would sometimes pass the same hambone back and forth to make soup. And she remembered what her mother told her: "Everyone was pretty poor then. If we had a party, we would serve Jell-O."

Mid and Tommie were already close, but the year their families lived together forged a particularly strong bond between the two. After Bill found work and the Gaddis family moved back to Ohio, Mid and Tommie filled frequent letters with homey news and confidences. Money would remain tight, but later in the 1930s and 1940s, Tommie's family and Mid's would rent a cottage on Lake Webster, in northern Indiana, for summer vacations together. Everyone was on a budget, so it was a modest, no-frills place, but those vacations spent on the water created lasting and happy memories.

The 1930s required many Americans to tighten their belts: Wes and Bertha Cole and their daughters were no exception. Wes was still working to build a sustaining business in the insurance industry, and his modest income made for some tough choices. On the Sunday before Thanksgiving in November 1932, he wrote a particularly poignant letter to Mid and Bill in Dayton, detailing his financial concerns. It read in part, "...find enclosed $1.00 bill for your dessert. Sorry we could not come over Thursday but we are so close on finances and our car is needing work. Tires are so poor, weather so uncertain I was afraid to plan so long a trip. We would not of (sic) been so short but my bank is closing up and I had my expense money deposited but when I went to withdraw it they made me apply $40 on a note which was not due for 60 days. So that upset my budget quite a little especially when I had every nickel planned. I suppose I will loose (sic) my stock $350 worth and my business. I simply haven't had any this month... I am carrying several policies on the girls and have been paid up until February 1933."

He went on to report that he and Bertha had attended Sunday school and church that day and that Frank and Tommie went home with them for dinner. Traveling to see Mid and Bill was almost out of the question, he emphasized: The bad tires and unreliable roads aside, he simply wasn't driving more than necessary.

A year later, Tommie's parents had seen little improvement in their circumstances. Writing to Mid and Bill just two days before Thanksgiving 1933, on letterhead from Indianapolis-based American States Insurance Company, where he had become the first agent, Wes began cheerfully enough. He and Bertha had been "quite busy last few weeks doing some church work," something not at all uncommon. Bertha Cole was proud to be asked to make four hundred Parker House rolls for Thursday night dinners at the Broadway Methodist Church, a task that often required teamwork. "She lined us up ready to deliver to this beautiful big new church," Tommie said. "My dad was 'ordered' to get that old Maxwell started in case he had to crank because the rolls wouldn't be good if they weren't eaten while they were hot."

Sharing with the church what modest means they had, Wes and Bertha were doing the same with their middle daughter, as evidenced by the rest of the

November 1933 letter. After recounting various events they had attended, Wes continued, "Wish you were here to join us in our various social events... All these things help to drive away the blues as I have not seen any business improvement that would help to encourage much but there is one thing about my business. I always have something to look forward to, either a policy or someone who might pay me... Mother and I each are enclosing a $1.00 for your Thanksgiving dinner and while we cannot be together we will each think of the rest." He signed the letter, "with all the love that parents can bestow we are your Dad and Mom," and added a post script: "Sorry we cannot do more but it just seems that it has to be limited."

Relying on Frank's modest salary and mindful that the Depression was affecting almost everyone, Tommie seemed willing and able to live frugally without complaint. She and Frank followed her parents' example when it came to pitching in to help the community. Tommie later explained that "we never got ahead much," but what Frank lacked in income he made up for in community service. He was "always willing to volunteer for something," Tommie told her sons.

In 1934, Tommie became pregnant again. It must have been an anxious time for the young couple. As the Depression deepened, the number of bank failures skyrocketed: In 1933 alone, more than four thousand banks in the U.S. failed. The resulting anxiety took a physical toll on Frank who, although he retained his bank job, developed a severe case of hives and suffered from allergies. For the Walker family, money "was very hard to come by," Tommie later recalled. She wanted to supplement the household income but felt she lacked the necessary "talent to go out and work because I just planned to be a housewife."

On New Year's Eve 1934, Tommie gave birth to their second son, and true to their agreement when Tom was born, Frank deferred to Tommie to name the baby. She chose Frank Dilling, in honor of her husband, with perhaps an unintentional nod to the candy company owner.

Tommie recounted the night of his birth in a letter she wrote eighteen years

later to Frank Jr.: "That night we began building dreams for you – for us – and for our new home we would build where you boys could have a dog and a yard to play in..." Frank and Tommie had traditionally spent New Year's Eve "in the gaiety of making merry," but on the night of their second child's birth, Tommie wrote, "we felt so deeply the presence of God, our Father, for our many blessings – for the thrill of our new baby son that on that night, we pledged to always on New Year's Eve to build our dreams and hopes for the coming year."

As a very young wife and mother, Tommie was exhibiting the quiet faith, the consistent sense of gratitude, and the practical approach to life that would sustain and distinguish her throughout her life. Those traits were hers by both nature and nurture. Bertha Cole had reared her children with them, and her influence profoundly shaped Tommie's own values and habits. Eventually, Bertha would gather her philosophy into a beautifully crafted presentation to her women's society at church. It emphasized the importance of enthusiasm, kindness, thoughtfulness, and gratitude, warned against useless worrying, and urged, "Forget yourself in your interest in those around you." All these lessons Tommie took to heart, shaping her actions and her relationships throughout her life to them.

Toward the end of 1935, she wrote to her sister Mid, beginning the letter in a way that was both characteristic and representative of the way she interacted with everyone: She started by talking not about herself, but about Mid and her family. She expressed concern that her sister was having trouble finding good child care (Mid worked for the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, supervising people who sewed), tempered with a light-heartedness and humor that became her hallmark.

"Better slow up...and take life a little lighter and easier," she wrote, "for you know important as everything we all do seems to us, the world will go on without us and get along, too." She also suspended plans for young Tom to visit his aunt and uncle, saying, "Just forget about Tom's visit now, for you

certainly have enough to worry about without another child." One can almost see the twinkle in Tommie's eye familiar to all who knew her when she added, "Perhaps at spring vacation or summertime the girls [meaning, Mid's and Bill's daughters] can have his majesty visit them."

Tommie also urged her sister not to be concerned about Christmas gifts, adding, "Ours is small. I've worried how we might have any, then Frank up and surprises me with a $10.00 Xmas savings he'd saved for me so I made it do, the best I could." There would be "nothing much – just 25¢ things for the kiddies. Tom's made scrapbooks for most of his little friends which has helped."

Tommie and Frank had moved just days before she wrote the letter, and she was immersed in washing windows and hanging curtains that week. Signing off at 9:30 p.m. with a note that she still had "a dozen things to do," Tommie conveyed her affectionate greetings to Mid's family ("looking forward to seeing you and Bill and the two sugar dumplings next Tuesday") and then, rather seriously, added this: "Frank and I were just talking how much we all really have to be thankful for that we still do have both our folks," who were planning a large meal for Christmas when the entire family would gather at Bertha and Wes Cole's house.

"Dad joins Mother in spirit and cooperation on preparing the dinner," Tommie observed. "I marvel at their pep and affection at their age." Her parents were not yet sixty but approaching the retirement age of sixty-five designated in the Social Security Act signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt earlier that year. Given her own high energy level, Tommie might have looked back later in her life and discerned a family trait at work.

In her letter to Mid, Tommie had alluded to Frank Jr.'s having special dietary needs and suffering from chickenpox – a much more serious case than Tom had. As the year drew to a close, the baby grew worse, and by his first birthday on New Year's Eve, he was in a coma, surrounded by specialists, "attempting to save the bit of life that was still in you," she later wrote to her younger son. "And thanks to God above, you lived through that night."

Young Frank, it turned out, was allergic to milk, wheat, and eggs, and for the next few years, Tommie and Frank Sr. worked to accommodate his needs. Frank later joked with his son, who was raised to a great extent on fresh orange juice, that he nearly broke his parents, because the requisite oranges year-round had to come from the City Market. Tommie, ever practical but creative, started putting small bowls of fruits and vegetables on the floor, hoping that as her toddler crawled around the apartment he would eat something.

As Frank Jr. got older, he gradually started outgrowing his food allergies, but Tommie and Frank for some time were challenged with feeding their son, especially away from home. One family story recounted that once, when the Frank Walker and Bill Gaddis families were traveling together, Tommie ordered a Coke and a ham sandwich for her two-year-old, knowing the items were on a short list of foods he could keep down. Certain that nearby diners would be horrified to see the choices for such a young child, Mid moved tables to distance herself from the anticipated scorn.

Even though various allergies affected both her husband and her younger son, Tommie seemed hale and hearty herself. But she was sympathetic to the health concerns of others and responded with genuine compassion to her sister Mid's medical problem, likely a miscarriage, in 1938. She began her letter, dated May 19 and addressed to Mid at the Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, "Dearest Mid, If the distance was not 125 miles between us I would be sitting by your side." Bill had sent a letter saying that Mid was fine now, which was welcome news, Tommie continued, "yet the other was most unhappy... As [Bill's] letter explained conditions would not have been normal had you gone the full time... we must feel it was for the best."

Then, in true Tommie form, she quickly dismissed her own news, promising to "appear in person in the very near future" to comfort Mid. Frank added his own postscript to the letter with words of encouragement and signed it, "loads of love." More letters to Mid followed that year, depicting a close bond between the sisters and illustrating Tommie's cheerful disposition.

Now thirty years old and the mother of two young boys, she was growing in maturity, confidence, and high expectations of herself. "I made a vow to

write you a long newsy special over the weekend," she began one Sunday late afternoon, "and while no one but myself knew the 'promise,' I did hate to let myself down..."

Her letter, "newsy" as planned, contained a witty account of Tommie's mishap with an iron that could be fully appreciated only in its entirety: "Friday evening about 2 p.m. I attempted to burn down the house – at least my absent minded carelessness proved that. This is my story as told to the insurance company – that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

"It came up a terrific rain storm (for a change) and as I ran to close the doors and windows and get the children in – up – or covered I thought I pulled the cord but after shutting myself in the bathroom for a shampoo and bath some hour later I opened the door to find the house smelling most repulsive and smoky. Upon touring the house from furnace to roof – I suddenly went into the dining room to find I had not turned the iron off and due to perhaps thunder or my closing the doors, the iron fell to the floor and burned a hole in the rug and also through the hardwood floor.

"I immediately called my fire insurance agent, Mr. Cole [Tommie's father] and he came out ...and now I await (also the ironing) for an adjuster to come settle for my priceless oriental."

Clearly all tongue in cheek, including the allusion to a "priceless oriental," the recounting of the mishap, as well as another story about little Frank singing around the house, seemed crafted to entertain her sister, who was still recovering from her medical problems and trying to find reliable childcare. Before signing off with "heaps of love to all," Tommie mentioned that she would be a hostess at the hospital for a Cheer Guild luncheon, an indication that she had already initiated her community service activities – activities that would expand and enrich her life and earn her accolades she did not expect and could not have imagined.

In fact, the luncheon was just one of two volunteer roles she played that day, as she told Mid in a follow up letter, because she also visited Goodwill

Industries where she was "shown through the place" and learned about the organization's needs. "I think I shall try to create interest in the kindergarten rooms and nursery end as that appeals to me as the greatest need and the place where help is needed."

She wrote those lines from the Riviera Club, a family recreational facility on the north side of Indianapolis, where, she quipped, "I am watching the swimmers...so if I pause too long you will know I am watching a new form of belly smacker." The subsequent, hilarious accounting of pool antics must have made her sister laugh.

Frank and Tommie found at the Riviera Club the summer of 1938 a place to spend time with friends, secure swimming opportunities for their sons, and build a sense of community. In the prime of life, they delighted in one evening Tommie described to her sister. After friends "came by and we played ping pong, had pink lemonade and peanuts and potato chips," they all proceeded to the club to swim. "We got out at eleven and then went upstairs and danced for an hour and back to the Irwins for sandwiches and Cokes. It was the first time, I believe, that Frank and I had been out with the crowd swimming since we were married, due to pregnancy, hives, small babies and depressions," she wrote, referring only obliquely to the financial constraints of the Great Depression.

The following night there was a pitch-in dinner with other friends, she told Mid, and instances throughout the week of Tommie and her sons swimming with other mothers and their children at the Riviera Club. After swimming, she reported that "Tom took his nap while Poot [the family nickname for Frank Jr.] sang and played. Daily my nine-year-old naps while the 3-year-old plays," she marveled, clearly surprised by a reversal of conventional roles. When she managed one evening to send Tom off to a neighborhood movie and get Frank to bed early, she reveled in the "peaceful dinner" she and Frank Sr. were able to have together.

In every way, it seemed, Tommie Cole Walker was enjoying her life. Only a very few close relatives might have known that, for Frank and Tommie,

budgets remained tight. And if she felt any growing discontent with the limitations of domestic life, Tommie did not disclose it in her letters. It was necessity, she later told interviewers and audiences, that moved her to say yes to an opportunity that came out of the blue one day in the autumn of 1939. And it was timing, she later assessed, that made her decision especially wise. Maybe it was luck.

Or maybe it was something indefinable yet present in Tommie from early in her life: an ability to quickly and accurately size up a situation and a quiet confidence in herself and her ability to meet head on whatever challenges she encountered.

While Tommie was quietly rearing two young children and establishing a life-long practice of community service, something exciting was afoot in the country. Honomichl described it this way: "The 1930s saw an explosion of new companies dedicated to this new thing called 'research.' Daniel Starch & Staff...opened its doors in 1932. Also in that period came Lloyd Hall & Associates; C. E. Hooper, Inc.; Crossley, Inc.; Stewart, Dougall & Associates; Phycological (sic) Corp.; Opinion Research Corp.; Willmark Research Corp.; and the American Institute of Public Opinion.

"Research was starting to become an American export. George Gallup set up affiliate relationships with survey companies in England and France in 1936, and A. C. Nielsen started a subsidiary in England in 1939, when World War II started."

By that year, awareness of this "new thing called research" reached the American National Bank in Indianapolis, where Frank Sr. was employed at a branch. He arrived home from work one October evening with interesting news: The bank was considering advertising on a local radio station and wanted to find out if anyone would listen to the classical music program they planned to sponsor. They were willing to pay someone fifty cents an hour to make phone calls to conduct the research needed to find out.

Talking to people and asking a few targeted questions was something Tommie knew she could do – after all, as a child she'd witnessed this very kind of conversation during visits to the general store – and she leapt at the opportunity. At her first client's direction, she used a phone book to randomly select numbers and then called area residents. Whoever answered heard Tommie's voice inquire, "Did you have your radio on last night? What station?"

Little did she realize that she had just elected to take the first step in a completely new direction – a step that would change her life.

What Tommie did know was that she was eager to supplement the household income and that she had a natural talent for getting people to open up to her. She once told an interviewer the reason she pursued that first assignment and the others that began to come her way. "It was definitely the need for money, and what that money did. We tried to belong to the Riviera Club and it was very expensive. Maybe it meant helping with the groceries, or maybe it meant shoes, back in those days, for Frank or for Tom, some school supplies.

"It wasn't for me to earn something to have, it was for family needed necessities. Necessity makes us do a lot of things. We feel pushed and pushed, but it helps us to grow... I wouldn't want to give up [the good years], and the bad years were the years I grew in my own ways to make me capable of enjoying the good years and doing what I did."

So although she didn't fully appreciate it then, the bank's research project was an enlightening experience. Nearly fifty years later, she told an interviewer that timing was an important factor. Market research, what Tommie called the "newest of sciences but the oldest of arts," was blossoming. Yet much more than financial gain was at play. "Aside from the need to add a few dollars to the family household, I had a lot of enthusiasm and energy and good health and a willingness to put in 16-18 hour days – collectively that is – family, community involvement and doing surveys door to door on a part-time basis – and in that order."

Through word of mouth and without a strategic plan, Tommie secured four

research studies in her first year of work and billed a total of $500. She was balancing her nascent business with her domestic life, and with two young sons (Tom was now ten, Frank Jr., five) and a husband with a full-time job, she had her hands full. But family came first. Despite their limited finances and full schedules, she and Frank still set aside time for a modest family vacation with Mid and her family at Lake Webster. It was important to her to give her sons happy memories.

One of young Frank's favorites centered on bath time and illustrated his mother's sense of humor. "Tom and I would take a bar of soap and head to the water off the end of the pier," he began an oft-repeated accounting. Tommie's instructions to her sons were meant to be followed, but they were delivered with her usual wit: "Start at your head and wash down as far as possible; then start at your feet and wash up as far as possible," she told them. "Next, look up and down the beach to see who is out; then, if at all possible, wash possible."

Back home, Tommie's work assignments began to come more often, simply by referral, making 1940 a year of building excitement for the energetic, enterprising Tommie.

But it was also a year of loss and heartbreak. The joys and sorrows of that first year of the new decade seemed to occur randomly. First, Frank's father, who was a regular at Tommie's dinner table, died at the age of seventy-four. William Arthur Walker, born in Cincinnati a year after the end of the Civil War, was a widower. His granddaughter Billilou later remembered him as "a staunch Republican" who, along with Wes Cole, "was always damning Roosevelt." He had retired from the Dilling Candy Company, where many years earlier his son had been known to sneak in a side door and grab a handful of peanuts in the chocolate-coating line on his way up to visit his dad in the finance department. His passing was cause for mourning at the Walker house.

Meanwhile, at the Wes Cole house, preparations were being made for Bertha to accompany Ruth to California, where her son, Kenny, was in the Army Air Force training and preparing for deployment. Although Pearl Harbor and the nation's entry into World War II were more than a year away, developments

in Europe meant that military service could turn into a far more dangerous profession in the next few years. Ruth had remarried in 1939, but that marriage was short-lived and now, in 1940, she was planning a move to California, where Wes's sister, Lena, and brother, William, lived. Employed at the San Bernardino Air Force Base, Ruth would spend the war years preparing maps for military flights out of California to the South Pacific.

While the year was shadowed by these events, the Cole family, in characteristic fashion, carried on in relative good humor whenever possible. In June, Wes and Bertha drove to Ohio to spend Father's Day with Mid and her family, prompting Tommie to pen a letter full of good-natured teasing.

She chastised her father for electing to spend the holiday with her sister, writing, "After 32 years of my thinking that I was your favorite daughter and Frank your favorite son-in-law, you run off to prove to me your middle daughter holds that honor." Referring to a recent innovation, the drive-in movie theater, she went on, "After refusing our invitations to dinner last night or today to be taken to the new outdoor theater, or to the elderest (sic) daughter's for chicken dinner, you drive 125 miles to probably nothing more than meat loaf with tomato goo on it!" Her jests ended with a list of household items her father could buy for his youngest child to make up for the slight. Tommie mailed the letter to Mid's house, hoping it would arrive while he was there.

A letter from Bertha, written to Mid the Monday after Father's Day, read in part, "We called Frank and Tommie after we got home. They had just got home from the 'drive in' theatre and told Dad about sending him a special delivery letter but she was disappointed he didn't get it while we were there for she wanted you to hear it..."

The Coles, bonded by their years as a close-knit farm family, understood each other. They filled their letters with warmth, shared little intimacies and signed off with genuine love and affection. Tommie and Mid especially seemed to appreciate the humor each infused in their letters.

In August 1940, Wes and Bertha sold the house at 2258 North New Jersey, where they'd lived since relocating to Indianapolis 18 years earlier. It was filled with good memories: Christmas Eve dinners with their family, for instance, when their young grandchildren staged "shows" on the stairway landing overlooking the dining room while the grownups lingered over coffee. Afterward, Wes would take the youngsters to the basement to distract them with games while the other adults, suggesting by their stomping around on the first floor that Santa had arrived, placed gifts under the tree. It was in this house that Bertha's elderly mother, Martha Cravens, had come to live with them, and out on the lawn the Cole sisters had posed together for photos.

But the house held more somber memories. The Coles had lost one of their sons there, and their surviving son, Hull, was now in failing health. Their grown daughters had lives and families of their own, and with Ruth moving, 1940 seemed like a good time to begin a new chapter in a new home, which they purchased at 1812 Kessler Boulevard.

Ten days after the move, on Friday, August 30, Wes went to the Riviera Club. He had been serving as vice president of the Riviera Boosters' Club, but he resigned the volunteer position that evening and stayed late, probably enjoying the company of his friends. At about midnight and without warning, he suffered a fatal heart attack, shocking those present.

The unexpected news stunned his family. Charles Wesley Cole, special representative of the American States Insurance Company, indulgent grandfather, and the doting father who had given Tommie her moniker, was gone at the age of sixty-two.

The family barely had time to adjust to Wes's absence when tragedy struck again. Albert Hull Cole, only in his mid-thirties, died after a long illness. Tommie had devoted countless hours to her brother, who had lost his eyesight, taking him to classes where he learned to use a white cane and develop trade skills.

She later recalled those times with a poignancy undiminished by the passage

of time: "He and his wife, Mary, had adopted Phil…who was two or two and a half. I remember going to the trade school with him on West Thirtieth, getting my mother to keep Frank and Tom. I did it willingly. I wanted to do it. I looked forward to it. I was happy I could do it. My brother knew they couldn't have children and I helped them find their way around to adopting a baby. I kept baby Phil when they first got him from the adoption home."

In the space of just a few months, Tommie had lost her father-in-law, her father, and her brother. Dealing with her own grief, she was also trying to provide emotional support to her mother. Bertha was in mourning, of course, but she also was facing financial worries as a new widow. In an unexpected turn of events, she took a job at Wasson's Department Store, the same place Tommie had found employment as a high school graduate, and rode the bus downtown to work.

Perhaps both Bertha and Tommie felt their work helped them cope with the heartaches of 1940. Tommie was beginning to gain her footing in her fledgling business but still considered it little more than a fun way to earn some extra money. Nevertheless, the financial contribution, while small, helped with expenses in the Walker household.

The first few research projects that materialized after the assignment from Frank's employer often entailed door-to-door interviews, a technique the Chicago Tribune pioneered in 1916 to learn about consumer purchasing habits. Sometimes she recruited a few other women to help her – usually friends and acquaintances who, like her, had the freedom to work part time while their children were in school. She and her fellow interviewers encountered every type of greeting, from an offer of a cup of coffee to a slammed door. Leery homemakers, unfamiliar with market research surveys but all too experienced with salesmen, were sure Tommie and her assistants were trying to hawk something – magazines or a Bible or a vacuum cleaner.

One of her first surveys became memorable for the lesson she learned in its execution. "I went hopping from door to door, showing ads for, I think it was soup…" she said. She'd written "can't read" across questionnaires when those

she called on were illiterate. Her client was not impressed: "I can hear Mr. Hanrihan saying, 'These are not worth anything – go do it again.' And I did. It never occurred to me when I was showing them those ads that they should be able to read what I was showing them. I was just so happy to be knocking on doors. I was probably angry that I had to do it again but I did it – it makes you grow."

One day, in a stroke of luck that would catapult her into an entirely new arena, Tommie happened to ring the right doorbell at the right time. She remembered the conversation well: "In those very early beginning days, I interviewed a very friendly cooperative lady who said her husband was sales manager for A&P Tea Company, a large grocery chain, and he had been looking for someone to 'check' his 125-plus regional stores. She gave me her husband's name, a Mr. Coleman, suggesting I phone him sometime. Needless to say, needing dollars as we did at that time, I phoned the next day."

Eventually securing an appointment, she went for an interview "dressed for business as best I could." For the pre-World War II-era, stay-at-home mom, that meeting was a novel experience. "I was shaking in my shoes at the interview because I'd always planned to be a wash-on-Monday, iron-on-Tuesday, church-circle-on-Wednesday kind of mother," she later told an interviewer, laughing.

But this wide-eyed, enthusiastic young woman demonstrated that she was both serious about the work and capable of doing it. Over a period of several weeks, she negotiated a contract that entailed visiting all 125 stores and reporting back. Her assignment was to discover the reasons for bottlenecks in the checkout lines. "In the end," she said, "I took the job and still continued to be a Cub Scouts den mother."

When the job was finally hers, she immediately faced a dilemma. "The first thing the gentleman asked me was, 'What's the name of your company?' Up till then I hadn't had one – it had just been 'Tommie and the girls.' Secondly, this gentleman said, 'We will give you a try, but you will not be working for us. You'll be a supplier and you must have insurance in case of accidents

and you must furnish your own transportation.'" That wasn't all, the A&P representative told her: She must have a dozen or more assistants who could reliably do the work and be willing to travel throughout the multistate region.

"Up until then, I had none of these," Tommie admitted. But that didn't stop this self-sufficient, self-confident, and determined former farm girl. She conferred with Frank and chose a name for her new enterprise: Walker Research Services.

With that step, Tommie realized she had truly founded a legitimate business of her own. A&P would remain a client for seventeen years and provide her with the opportunity to "meet, know and work for many of the companies whose products were found on the shelves of all grocery stores," she once said. This one client, with its high name recognition and broad geographic reach, helped establish Walker Research Services' reputation and provided a fairly reliable income stream.

Other assignments, from a variety of companies, soon followed, as clients spread her name. Tommie didn't advertise or market Walker Research; rather, she let it be known that she was available for part-time work and rarely allowed a legitimate opportunity to slip by. But she would never accept an assignment that required selling anything, she asserted, because "selling something was not research." Her abilities, confidence, and principles were all paying off in revenues.

Fulfilling one of their long-held dreams, Tommie and Frank moved in 1941 to 5915 Compton Street, a house in a quiet Indianapolis neighborhood where their sons could play in the yard. The business she started at her kitchen table moved to a larger office – the basement of her new house – which consisted of a second-hand desk adjacent to the family ping-pong table, Toby their pet dog's blanket, a coal-burning furnace, and a Kenmore washer with a hand wringer. "And we thought it was nice," she later joked.

Tommie recalled that in those early years of the company, "...my work day started when my sons left for elementary school, and often I would return to my basement office at night to complete reports to clients. I always made a long list and felt satisfied when I got through it in a day. And with a list I was aware of the things I wanted to accomplish and I gained control over my time."

About a year after her first project, Tommie began earning seventy-five cents an hour – a 50 percent increase over what the bank had paid her – and the variety of research increased. Early studies sometimes involved the entire Walker family. One requested by a theater chain owner sent Frank Sr. and his sons to movies free of charge. With a clicker in each hand they would tally the number of people in attendance to verify that ticket sales figures matched the number of audience members.

Other projects involved testing new or existing products for various companies. That entailed large truckloads being delivered to the Walker home where items were counted out and distributed to individuals or groups. Everyone at the house helped unload and sort deliveries, including Tom and young Frank's friends, if they happened to be around at the time. Shipments were of 500 cases of starch, or 600 loaves of bread, or of cereals, detergents, or hand cream. The list went on and on. Once, Frank and his lucky playmates sat on the front porch and taste-tested candy.

"I never had the feeling that she had to cajole us to do anything," Frank later said of his mother. "It was either fun and exciting, or just the way it was."

But there certainly were many tasks that none of the family could perform. For door-to-door surveys, visits to the A&P stores in various cities and myriad other duties, Tommie needed staff. She found them in the vast numbers of women who, like her, had families and wanted or needed additional household income but had only limited opportunities, due to their education level and the biases of the times, to earn it. "Give me a woman with a dozen irons in the fire – she makes the best researcher because she likes people," Tommie once told a newspaper reporter, who wrote, "When she goes to other cities and

needs a big staff she appeals to universities and department store part-time workers, and always gets her women."

Unlike Frank Walker, who readily endorsed and supported Tommie's work, many husbands looked unfavorably on their wife's employment outside the home. "But that didn't stop Tommie," noted one newspaper. "Rather, with her drive and ambition, and very often her persuasion, she always came up with enough hands, or figured out a way to manage without them."

She charged clients based on the number of hours required for a project, taking into consideration the wages she paid her part-time employees, plus an agency handling fee as was customary for the still-young market research business. But she could not pay her interviewers until her clients paid her, and it pained her that delays in receipts could put her workers at a disadvantage. She provided them with some informal training – perhaps only an hour or two with each study questionnaire, hoping it was sufficient to eliminate any bias – before sending them out to work.

As for her clients, Tommie made sure they were realistic in their expectations. Her values, instilled by her parents and solidified by her own thinking, guided her. Some agencies and services demanded a set number of interviews per day, she later explained, adding, "I never believed in that because I thought that was encouraging dishonesty in a study, and although sometimes I had to accept a job on that basis, I never asked an interviewer to do that..."

With the United States' entry into World War II in December 1941, the Walker family joined the rest of the country in making adjustments. Frank Sr., who had left banking and was now an agent for the Claude Jones Agency of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, was over the age limit for military service. Instead, he went to work for Allison Engine Company, a division of General Motors headquartered in Indianapolis that made aircraft engines. In the spring of 1942, the federal government began a food rationing program and encouraged citizens to plant "victory gardens" at home. The Walkers quickly complied.

Tanks, ships, planes, and weapons for the war effort required massive amounts of metal: A single tank needed eighteen tons, and one of the navy's biggest ships took 900 tons. Anything using metal, from chicken wire to farm equipment, was also rationed, and Americans were urged to turn in scrap metal for recycling. Like countless thousands of students and members of community groups across the country, Tom and Frank Jr. rallied to support the effort and conducted scrap metal drives.

Even as the sacrifices and shortages of the war increased, Tommie's business flourished. Her billings in 1942 were still small – just about $1200 – and she continued to run the business out of her home office, employing other women and adding cash to her family's coffers. Her husband, commenting on the business that took place at their house, joked with friends, "I never know what men I'll see in the kitchen with my wife when I come home."

World War II affected not just daily life but also the nature of Walker Research assignments. In a feature in the *Indianapolis Star*, Tommie was described as an "expert in market research," a credential she had earned by experience and astute observation in just five years. Here is how the March 1945 article reported her work during the war years: "Her research has covered such a wide variety of subjects that she cannot even remember all of them, and each one took special training. For one on lighting she learned all the intricacies of electricity, for one on postwar radios she had to delve into frequency modulation and television. Rugs, vacuum sweepers, greeting cards, vitamins, helicopters, theaters, and whether children know brand names, all have been the subjects of studies.

"One manufacturer wanted a check on safety glass which had been made several years ago. This necessitated finding old cars, so she took some workers to a small town in the southern part of the state. 'It was a cold day, so we worked in the sunniest part of the Courthouse square. We looked for the trade-mark in the corner: then if the glass had shattered or looked frosted, as it does when the two layers separate, we had to sketch it. We happened to start working right under the sheriff's window, and he soon was conducting an investigation. He was so intrigued that he called in one of his deputies with

an old car he thought filled our bill, and sent for the reporter from the town paper.'"

Tommie conducted studies for dealers with distribution problems because salesmen, who had left their jobs to serve in the military, were not in the field to follow up. Sugar rationing prompted a study to determine if cough drops would take the place of candy on drug and grocery store counters.

Frank Sr. drove the family car to work in those days, often making it necessary for Tommie and her part-time helpers to execute Indianapolis deliveries of test products by bus. "There were times when I'd bus hop all day and get home just in time to put out the peanut butter and jelly for Frank and Tom's after-school snack," Tommie told a reporter. "We'd visit for a while, and then I would take off again and finish the deliveries."

She said she often had to take the bus across town to conduct interviews. Illustrating the need to adroitly shift from her roles as mother and homemaker to business owner and back again, she joked that she sometimes would leave her fingernail polish in the drainpipe next to the bus stop and collect it at night before rushing home to prepare dinner.

As the war continued, and Tommie's work took her to other cities, travel became more problematic. "We worked in teams on studies because of transportation," Tommie recalled later, "and if you were sending three or four interviewers to Shelbyville or South Bend or Evansville [Indiana], you traveled in the same car and doubled up in the hotel because of a very limited budget.

"One client (a research director for a utility) went on a study with me, and he said he never spent so much time sitting in his car, waiting for me. But I came out with embroidered pillow slips from one, and fresh eggs from another, and being invited to stay for dinner. To me, I was having a nice time!"

It was "always exciting and flattering when somebody would call from a distant city," Tommie thought. And those calls came often enough that her

revenues gradually increased: In 1944, billings were $1,460, or about $19,400 in 2014 dollars. While that amount was modest in volume, it was significant in practical terms. In the U.S., the average cost of a new house was $3,450, average wages per year were $2,400, a gallon of gas cost fifteen cents and a loaf of bread ten cents. Whatever Tommie was clearing after paying her part-time workers, it was making a tangible difference at the Walker house.

Tommie had definitely found her niche. Market research as an industry was gaining recognition and legitimacy, to be sure, but more important was the fact that Tommie was ideally suited for the work she had simply stumbled upon. For one thing, she enjoyed talking with people, and this work fit perfectly with her sociability and inquisitive nature. She told a reporter, "I've done everything from watching a strange woman bake a cake in her own kitchen or bathe her baby, to finding out why she doesn't buy eggs at her corner grocery, and everybody is interesting to talk to."

It was a form of on-the-job training, this method of qualifying herself for her profession as she went along, and as her abilities and experiences increased, she was informing herself to make insightful advances in the science and the art of market research. Her natural aptitude shown through when she told a reporter, "I've trained my eye and mind to pick out certain things. If I met a friend on the street I probably wouldn't notice whether her dress was blue or red, but I can sit in a restaurant 10 minutes and tell how many times a waitress has to walk across a room and how her steps could be saved. I can shop a grocery store once and develop a plan for rearranging the merchandise so that it will sell better."

She could be immensely practical in her advice, based in part on how she ran her own home and in part because, distinctively Tommie, she saw things so clearly. When an A&P grocery store manager lamented that he couldn't seem to accurately predict broccoli sales from one week to the next, resulting in his either running out or having stock go to waste, she said, "But that doesn't take a great mind. If a woman's had broccoli this week, she isn't going to buy it

next Saturday. She's going to wait a couple weeks. To me this is just common sense. So I had the idea that if you had some menus or a consumer person in the store [to] answer questions...and point out their specials...this could be a service [to customers]."

With such abilities and insights, Tommie was becoming skilled at discerning what the information she gathered meant both for her client and for the future in broader terms. She was, for example, remarkably prescient during the newspaper interview in May 1945, after three years of domestic industrial efforts had been focused almost exclusively on war requirements. Reflecting on the fact that U.S. factories had shifted their production from consumer goods such as refrigerators and cars to tanks and bombs, she concluded, "We never before have had a period when things were not manufactured. We'll have new materials to work with, things like electronics. We'll have to get the public's reaction to many innovations."

Even as she was building a business, which she still considered a profitable hobby, and managing a household, Tommie found time to give back to the community, often in a leadership role. She was president of the Parent Teacher Association at Indianapolis Public School #80, where Frank was a student; active in the Children's Cheer Guild of Methodist Hospital, serving for a time as president; a Cub Scout den mother; and a member of the Indianapolis Advertising Club.

During the war years, she volunteered with the American Red Cross, beginning an affiliation that would last the rest of her life. She first worked in the canteen service, with the blood bank unit, going where she was needed – the downtown mobile unit, Stout Army Air Field on the city's west side, or Fort Benjamin Harrison east of the city. At Stout Field, she met the hospital planes that brought injured soldiers from the Pacific theater, and at Fort Harrison, she helped serve food during Sunday evening parties for soldiers. Katy Heuhl, who became a lifelong friend, first encountered Tommie when they were among the volunteers who met the troop trains passing through and provided coffee and donuts at the railway station.

Tommie's community service and her blossoming business began attracting more attention: In May 1945, she was the guest speaker at the annual Orange Aid Mother-Daughter assembly at Broad Ripple High School, where Tom was a student. At age thirty-seven, she addressed her audience on the topic, "Girls Today – Women Tomorrow." It was just one of what became countless public speaking engagements for Tommie Walker. She never promoted herself for that work; her entertaining, insightful talks were popular, and as word spread about them, she received more requests to address all types of groups. Over the years, hundreds of people would be influenced by the wit and wisdom Tommie shared with her audiences.

The mood at Broad Ripple High School that day was surely buoyant not only because of the speaker's sparkling wit. The Allied victory in Europe had just been assured with Germany's surrender, and there was growing optimism that the end of World War II was near. Within months, the war would at last be over.

With peace came new developments in Tommie's industry. As described by Honomichl, "There was a postwar boom in research. Of the top ten research companies in the United States in 1976, all but one (Nielsen) were founded after World War II. This period also saw the advent of the electronic computer, which broke open the way to large-scale data manipulation."

Opportunities were arising for Tommie in particular. In 1946, Walker Research billings totaled $2,259, almost double those of two years earlier. Perhaps no assignment during the 1940s was more memorable than the "Train of Tomorrow" study on train transportation conducted on the New York Central and Santa Fe Super Chief. Frank Sr. and young Frank would take Tommie to the station near the Indiana State Fairgrounds to board the sleeper car and upon her return days later, pick her up at Union Station downtown. While she was away, her younger son sometimes spent the night with friends; other times, his grandmother Bertha Cole (who had remarried after Wes died, and was now Bertha Stubbs), stayed at the Walker home to cook and care for the family.

Frank Sr.'s unquestioning support was an important factor in Tommie's ability to take on this especially distinctive project. After all, it was uncommon at that time for a woman to travel alone on business. Young, attractive, and outgoing, Tommie would have been distinctive even as a regular passenger, but her work certainly drew attention. That Frank Sr. sent her on her way without reservation reflected not only a mutual trust and a solid marriage, but also his uncommonly progressive acceptance of Tommie's work requirements.

It was evident that Tommie enjoyed the train study, which took her to the very places her brothers Hull and Mike had only pretended to visit when they were all children playing together on the Tipton County farm. In those games, Tommie had been required to "sit still." Now, she was the one in motion. She later recalled, "One of the greatest experiences in those years shortly after World War II was my five back-to-back round trips from New York to California for the New York Central and Santa Fe Railroads... My traveling train office was a bedroom compartment. From this point I'd start interviewing, by a preselected pattern, every sixth passenger.

"Some of these included celebrities like Bob Hope, Ginger Rogers, and Lena Horne and their managers, and dozens of others not so well known, but all of whom were gracious and cooperative and interesting. There was also the newly formed comedy team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, who were 'too busy' to be interviewed while getting their act together behind a closed door."

Tommie said that meeting these people was "exciting to me at the moment," but she didn't let the exposure go to her head. Talking with more typical riders kept her grounded and provided her with humorous speech material. She loved telling about one such conversation: "In the interview, I handed out a pamphlet that was all illustrated with clever pictures – it was self-explanatory and sort of entertainment. Then I'd sit with the people and chat with them and then I'd say, 'I'm representing the train you're riding on and I'll be back later to answer any questions and pick up your questionnaire.' I said 'We're designing the car of tomorrow.' And this lady said, 'But I won't be on the train tomorrow. I'm getting off at my sister's in Kansas City.'"

She could also laugh at some of the research projects her clients devised. Television was a new medium, and in the late 1940s, Indianapolis got its first and, for a period of time, only station, WFBM. Wanting to determine whether commercials broadcast on the station were holding viewers' attention, a New York-based client asked Walker Research to help them judge just how many people stayed in front of their TV sets during commercial breaks.

Tommie would chuckle when she described the methodology the company asked her to use. It involved young Frank and a stopwatch: For several nights, he timed specifically when commercials were played. Tommie then went to the water company, secured the figures on water usage, and tracked the ups and downs in pressure. The theory was that if the water pressure did not go down much during a commercial, it was effective in keeping the viewer's attention. On the other hand, low pressure meant it was a poor commercial. Laughable, yes, but it helped pay the bills.

The combination of Walker Research revenues and postwar auto production even made it possible for Frank and Tommie to purchase a new Mercury in 1947, and with the easing of gasoline rationing, they were able to take a three-week trip to California. Tom, now almost eighteen, stayed home for his summer job, but Frank Jr., who was only twelve, went along, and they all visited Tommie's sister Ruth and her son, Kenny. He had been a radio operator on a C-47 that flew dangerous missions over Japanese-held, jungle-covered, and mountainous territory during the war. Now he was back in the States and working as a supervisor at an orange grove.

The following year, Martha Cravens, Tommie's maternal grandmother, died in Indianapolis at the age of ninety-five. She had moved into the East Fifty-fourth Street home of her son, Harry Cravens, after living for a time with Bertha and Wes Cole, and had remained "active for her age and had been ill only two days," the newspaper obituary reported. Born before the Civil War, she had lived to see her granddaughter establish a business and a career that women of her own generation could scarcely imagine.

Her granddaughter was continuing to build a solid business reputation,

capturing the attention of at least one local employer. Just a week after she attended an Advertising Club meeting at Highland Country Club, Tommie received a letter dated June 16, 1948, from Frank's Quality Furniture. It addressed her as "Miss Tommy Walker" and got right to the point: "Your name has been suggested to the writer, for the position of advertising manager for our stores." It asked her to contact the writer (George E. Frank) to arrange an interview. That was probably the first job offer resulting from her business connections, but it wouldn't be her last.

Tommie stuck to what she was doing, instead, and that included public speaking. Now a mature woman, self-educated and successful, and a wife and mother, she had a lot to offer to one of her audiences – the young girls who were members of the Horizon Club. Her theme when she spoke with them at Camp Lively was "helping others as a hobby," and she began with an exuberant, "So let's settle down and talk about you!" Once again, she was following her mother's lead and exhibiting her habit of turning the conversation away from herself to others.

In that speech, Tommie sought to inspire and motivate, and she did so in a highly conversational, warm, and caring way. Touching on a theme she would use over and over again throughout her life, she urged the girls to be thankful and to express their gratitude. She told them, "When you think of others, you become an executive in your own right, for you make others feel important. Happy women make happy homes – happy homes make happy families – happy families make stronger communities – and happy, powerful nations."

Thinking of others was something Tommie did automatically, and while it was typically part of her everyday interactions, it also manifested itself in her ongoing community service. She told the Horizon Club that she had recently visited the State School for Girls (a correctional facility) where she was a Camp Fire sponsor. In one sentence she spoke volumes: "Helping others can be a hobby, for I can hardly wait until Monday night when I am privileged to go back to the school...to plan our Halloween Party." With all the demands on Tommie's time, she found both the energy and the enthusiasm for such endeavors.

Very little slowed her down: The January 1949 issue of *The Adscript*, a publication of the Indianapolis Advertising Club, reported that Tommie was home recovering from surgery (a hysterectomy, although that detail was not divulged). She was pictured in bed on the phone, suggesting she was still working, with bouquets of flowers at her bedside. "Tommie's sorta tough competition for the beauty of the flowers, donchathink?" winked the photo caption.

By April she was back on her feet and in the news, serving as the dinner speaker for the annual Matrix Table banquet held by the DePauw University chapter of the women's journalism society, Theta Sigma Phi. The group was marking its fortieth birthday with a formal event in the Mason Hall dining room and had invited Tommie Walker, a high school graduate, to address outstanding junior and senior women at that well-regarded university. It must have been gratifying to Tommie, always sensitive about her lack of a college education.

Not that the absence of a college degree was impeding her progress. Later that year, Tommie moved Walker Research into its first "away from home office," taking the backroom of a building at 666 East Sixty-Second Street. There Frank Sr., recruited by the Franklin Life Insurance Company, was setting up his new insurance agency office. He announced its formal opening soon after, in the first weeks of 1950, as the Northside General Agency of the company, with three associates. And here, too, Frank Jr. had one of his first jobs, as part-time janitor for his parents' offices.

Funded in part by fees from studies that reflected the times – one on consumer acceptance of home televisions sets, another gauging consumer preferences between early commercial airlines and the very railroad-based travel she had researched just a few years earlier – the office building was distinctive enough to garner attention.

"The quiet and thoughtful elegance of the early South lends its touch of serenity to the new office building of the Franklin Life Insurance Co. and the Walker Research Service at 666 E. 62nd St.," an article in the Sunday edition of a local newspaper read. "Many have been stopped by the architecture. They

climb out of their cars and inquire who did the work, who made the design. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Walker are a business team, in different businesses, but with similar architectural tastes. When Mr. Walker was appointed general agent for the Franklin Life Insurance Co. of Springfield, Ill., he established quarters in the growing North Side."

Settling into new offices was just part of the Walkers' moving experience in 1950. In addition to the office relocation, they sold their house on Compton Street that summer and moved into a two-bedroom apartment near the high school their sons attended. It might have been difficult to give up their first "dream house," but in addition to the expenses of establishing the joint office space there would be college bills for Tom. And those might have been daunting to the couple, even with their two incomes.

A dual-income household was still a bit of a novelty in 1950: Only about one of five married women worked outside the home. But that wasn't the only thing that distinguished Frank and Tommie Walker. They shared a commitment to their community and put it into action. The article went on to say, "Mr. Walker is one of the Number One citizens of Broad Ripple.... He has been a president of the Fathers Association of the Broad Ripple High School, and is a member of the Broad Ripple Business Mens; a past master of the Pentalpha Lodge No. 564; Broadway Methodist Church; Indianapolis Athletic Club, and the Riviera Club."

Evidence of Tommie's involvement was everywhere, too. She continued to be active in various civic organizations, including Cub Scouts, the YWCA, and the Indianapolis Campfire Girls, as well as the Broadway Methodist Church. Now in her tenth year as a business owner, she also was serving as executive secretary of the Indianapolis Advertising Club, secretary/treasurer of the 5th District Advertising Federation of America, and a member of the American Marketing Association.

Requests for her to speak came from other cities in 1950: On June 21 she was the dinner speaker at the Indiana Chapter of the American Marketing Association held at a country club in Hagerstown, Indiana; on September 27

she spoke to the Advertising Club in Evansville, Indiana. The announcement for that engagement reflected the era in the advertising world: "Mrs. Tommie Walker – glamorous president of Walker Research Service, Indianapolis, and executive secretary of the Advertising Club of Indianapolis," it read. "Subject: 'Opinions DO Count,' a short discussion of market research at the consumer level… 'no technical stuff, but a practical approach,' Mrs. Walker assures us… Bring any guests who are interested in the vital subject of consumer research." The local newspaper reported the upcoming guest speaker had just completed a 9,236-mile transcontinental tour the previous month but gave no details.

By far her most memorable speaking engagement that year was for the Grand Rapids, Michigan, Ad Club, which assumed, judging solely by her name, that she was a man. One can imagine the surprise of the club officers when the perfectly coiffed, professionally attired, and completely female Tommie Walker arrived. Stepping to the podium to introduce her to the all-male audience, the club president scoffed, "We promise not to ever do this again!"

She could laugh about it later, and often did, but it was a painful moment, Tommie later told an interviewer. "There I stood on the podium by myself thinking, 'Why doesn't this floor open up? It needs me!' But you're either a quitter or you stick with it." So she stuck with it. In retelling the story years afterward, she said, "Right then you'd like to feel like, please, God, just open up the door and get me out of here. Let me go! But you don't. You go through it. It's awful to go through something like that, but you do it." And there was one consolation, she said: "Then to find out that the guy couldn't bear this fact and he'd been [to] the bar drinking."

There were other awkward moments, such as an incident in Kane, Pennsylvania, when Tommie was in town to conduct research. Apparently her actions aroused the suspicions of local law enforcement. The chief of police asked Tommie, "If you ain't selling and you ain't buying, what are you here for? Better be out of town first thing tomorrow." And she was.

From a "glamorous president" to an embarrassing mistake to a suspicious presence in a small town, Tommie wore several hats. But none fit her better than the one she wore at home, as wife and mother. When the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper held a contest in 1950 as part of an annual National Newspaperboy Day, it was Tommie's letter, describing why she was glad her son was a *Star* carrier, that won Frank Jr. the opportunity to be editor for the night at the paper. (He was one of only two to do so, his cohort being Dick Jordan.)

Indiana Governor Henry F. Schricker met with Dick and Frank prior to their guest editorship, and the three were pictured in the *Star* reviewing the governor's proclamation denoting Saturday, October 8, 1950, as Newspaperboy Day. The two young men and their parents would be the governor's guests at a luncheon and football game on Saturday, according to the accompanying caption. Knowing how important this recognition was to Frank, Tommie made sure he had a new dress shirt, purchased for the occasion at Indianapolis's upscale department store William H. Block Company.

As early as 1951, just a dozen years after her first project and more than twenty years before it was formalized, Tommie had begun formulating her thinking around the simple phrase, "Your opinion counts." In fact, that was the topic for a speech she gave November 5 to the Monday Afternoon Club (presumably in the greater Indianapolis area, although records do not indicate the location).

A follow-up news story described what the club members heard: "Mrs. Walker spoke on 'Your Opinion Counts,' pointing out that it is the women who do most of the buying in the average household. She explained that her organization does market research; that is, they test products for several years, if necessary, before they are released to the market. Although the cost of research is high it is not as great as making an untried product available on a national scale and then having it fail...."

The article went on to say that Tommie had personally interviewed thousands of people on subjects ranging from breakfast cereals to deodorants, from funeral directors to cake mixes, and now had a staff of twenty-five trained interviewers.

"In addition to being an attractive, unaffected young woman," the article concluded, "Mrs. Walker has a deep understanding of human nature. Her natural approach to people's everyday problems makes her an outstanding figure in the business world today."

The reporter accurately summed up some of Tommie's greatest strengths. Instinctively, she knew how to deal with everyone from a befuddled interviewee on a train to a testy small-town police chief to her adolescent son, anxious about meeting the governor.

The summer of 1951, Frank and Tommie's son Tom received his degree from DePauw University, achieving the college education neither of his parents had been able to afford. Still living on a fairly tight budget, Frank and Tommie resolved to buy just a "little gift" to commemorate the occasion. But before they could make the purchase, the refrigerator in their apartment broke, and the money intended for a gift went to replace it. For years afterward, the family joked that Tom's graduation present was a refrigerator.

At the close of the year, Tommie and Frank took stock, as they traditionally had done every New Year's Eve since young Frank's birth. Walker Research Services was doing well, and Tommie's many speaking engagements and extensive community service continued to increase her visibility and contributed to the demand for her counsel.

Frank had recently been given a promising business opportunity as vice president of advertising sales for the newly created *TV News*, an Indianapolis publication, which he anticipated would increase the household income. Their son Tom was engaged to Dottie Henson, and they were looking forward to the June wedding.

And then there was the surprise they found under their Christmas tree that year: "...fifty dirty one dollar bills young Frank had saved from his after-school work," Tommie explained, with a note attached that read, "To the most wonderful Dad and Mom in the world – here's a start for our new home – not a house – that we've planned to build in '52."

Everything seemed to be going their way as they began the new year. Exuberant, Frank told his wife on Sunday, January 13, "Oh, Tommie – '52 is without a doubt going to be our triumphant year!"

Indianapolis was unseasonably warm as 1952, a leap year, began. Temperatures in the state capital interrupted winter, and the warm spell extended to the northern part of Indiana where, on Wednesday evening, January 16, Tommie settled into a hotel in South Bend. She had traveled there to conduct a training session for potential interviewers, and at 11:00 that night she was on the phone with Frank Sr., saying goodnight.

The next day was especially balmy: the temperature would reach sixty-three degrees in South Bend that day. But Tommie was indoors first thing in the morning, at work in a restaurant coffee shop, talking with the women she hoped to hire. In Indianapolis, it was even warmer, on the way to a record breaking sixty-six degrees, and drizzly. The Walker household, accustomed to Tommie's business travel, was carrying on without her. Tom wasn't there: After graduating from DePauw University, he had entered the U.S. Army and was in basic training at Fort Breckenridge, Kentucky.

But young Frank, a junior at Broad Ripple High School, was home that Thursday and pleased because it was semester break, affording a two-day suspension of classes. The night before, with Tommie in South Bend, he had shared dinner with his dad before heading out for a date. Frank confided to his teenage son that he had not felt at all well earlier in the afternoon. "I felt like I could have died," he said in jest, and the two laughed together before continuing their conversation. On Thursday morning, Frank Jr. was preparing to go to his part-time job at a filling station at noon, taking advantage of the school break to earn some extra cash.

Frank Sr. had left home earlier and driven himself to his doctor's office because he was still not feeling well. After a quick exam, the doctor told Frank he could find nothing wrong. But he acknowledged Frank did not look well

and, promising to visit his patient later that afternoon, told him he should go home. Frank went to his car to comply.

Soon afterward, Tommie Walker was paged in the coffee shop. It was Frank's brother Charlie Walker, who started the conversation by reporting that Frank Sr. had been in an accident. But eventually, he broke the shocking news to her that, in truth, Frank had suffered a fatal heart attack that morning. It was almost more than Tommie could take in. "I had just talked to him about 11:00 the night before," she later said. "This was 8:15 the next morning. He was one-half block from the doctor's and for a long time I felt rather bitter. Why did the doctor let Frank leave the office and drive half a block? But he did."

Tom got the news from an officer at his base, whose blunt delivery of the message made its content all the more painful. It was up to Charlie to break the news to his young nephew, in a phone call. "Get your feet on the ground, young man," he began. Frank didn't make it to the filling station for work that day. Standing alone in the Walker apartment in disbelief, he eventually told the shocking news to a neighbor, who stayed with him until Charlie arrived to steady his shaken nephew and await Tommie's return.

Frank Walker Sr. was three months shy of his forty-seventh birthday when he died. While he had suffered various maladies and had an unfilled prescription for medication to treat his high blood pressure, nothing prepared his family for the news of his death. On a Sunday soon after the funeral, Tom was on his way downtown to catch a ride back to Fort Breckenridge, and Frank Jr. had gone to a meeting. Tommie was home with Dottie, her future daughter-in-law, writing to her sister Mid. She wished they were closer geographically, she began, "but after all Dayton – Indianapolis are close and we are close where ever we live."

In a long, intimate letter, Tommie poured out the tiny details and overwhelming emotions of the days following Frank's death. Charlie Walker had spent some portion of every day with her; a steady stream of friends had come by, too, and she gratefully acknowledged, "no dollars could buy the friendships and expressions of same, he has left in the hearts of his fellow men, for which we will reap the returns upon."

She counted "about 175 floral pieces, 200 some cards or letters, 17 telegrams, 1000+ people at the mortuary," she said, adding, "I feel differently about flowers now – they mean so much more and like kind words, they soften the sorrow in one's heart and mind." The multiple levels of floral arrangements that ringed the entire room at the funeral home had caused Tommie to gasp in surprise and gratitude.

The outpouring of support was almost overwhelming, but in true Tommie fashion, she inserted a bit of humor as she reported to her sister, "Flowers and cards continue to come in. 2 new fresh ones [bouquets] arrived yesterday, which kept the record up for the week... and an ex- interviewer brought us by a large standing rib roast piping hot Thursday evening so we've had a class 'A' sandwich filling to supplement the peanut butter."

She laced the rest of the letter with anecdotes that depicted both the family's sense of humor and her own. Yet there were also worries about finances: Debts had to be paid and very few funds were in reserve. And there was the grief that she could not put aside. "Today is the first day that I can say, the dull thud in the heart has been replaced with a horrible lonely, restless feeling," she confided to Mid. "You might say it's the first day I've felt lonesome and empty inside."

She and her sons believed that Frank's work was done on earth, and in recalling his prediction for a wonderful 1952 she wrote, "If we believe in a world here after, then we must believe 52 is Frank's triumph year and that things that are coming to us are making it that kind of year for us too." More of his work on earth would be done over the next several years: In his memory, the Dad's Club of Broad Ripple High School established the Frank D. Walker Scholarship Fund.

From friends and from her relatives – her sisters, her brother-in-law and his family, and certainly her sons – Tommie was receiving a wealth of love and support. Now, as she and Frank Jr. began settling into a home life together, she was especially grateful for his presence and sensitivity. "Frankie went to his church for breakfast this a.m. and when he came back he'd gone down

to the cemetery by himself... he's been a darling!" she wrote Mid. "Gets up first, puts a pillow under my head, the morning paper on my face, turns on the radio, has the teakettle brewing and is talking a mile a minute about our 'budget plans' for our new life together."

Frank's funeral took place on an icy, snowy, miserably cold winter day: The weather had changed abruptly, typical in Indiana according to conventional wisdom. Afterward, Tommie invited her minister at Broadway Methodist Church, the Reverend Doctor Robert B. Pierce, whom she addressed as Dr. Bob, back to the house to speak with her sons. He followed up with a letter to her in which he gave the new widow some advice: "You're young. You can think. You've got a head on you. I want you not to grieve for Frank. I want you to think of the happy times you had, the very happy times you had together. Look at your sons – you're going to make it for them, no matter what your finances... It's up to you. Don't keep Frank's clothes... Tom and Frank are not going to wear his clothes... Get those out of the house and you keep living memories."

She took Dr. Bob's advice about the clothes. "He didn't have too much to get rid of," she later recalled. And then, she continued, "I had to go to work real fast. I didn't have time to feel sorry [for myself]. I had to make some money. We had two old cars at the time, secondhand cars. I had to sell one of them right away and make the payment on the other.

"Every day, I moved on to something that was waiting on me."

Chapter Three

Building The Business, Passing It On

What was waiting for Tommie would test her, but in the end, prove her abiding resilience. Even as the letters of condolences and the flower arrangements were still pouring in, Tommie was quickly coming to terms with the fact that she would now be the "head of a household," as she expressed her new position. Frank's death, so unexpected and so hard to bear, meant that she would need to do something to support young Frank and herself. But what?

"Many of my friends were going to the finance center at Fort Harrison," she later recounted. "They were hiring women without business backgrounds. You would get $59 a week [more than $500 per week in 2014 dollars], with deductions all out." Fort Benjamin Harrison, where Tommie served as a Red Cross volunteer and where prisoners of war from Italy and Germany were detained during World War II, was becoming a significant civilian employer. In 1951, both the Adjutant General School and the Finance School had moved there, and ground had been broken for the new Army Finance Center. Once again, Tommie was mindful that her opportunities, already limited by her gender, were further constrained by her lack of a college education.

She weighed the Fort Harrison option as well as another one that landed at her feet. Among her clients at the time was the research firm Stewart, Dougall Surveys (S-D): She performed supervisory work for them ten days

a month, setting up and hiring their supervisors in the territory east of the Mississippi. S-D had proven to be a congenial enough customer. "They gave me this leeway – I could go to St. Louis, Chicago, Atlanta, and they'd say stay three hours, three days, three weeks, but find us a supervisor who has these qualifications," she later explained. "I would go to the city and check into a respectable address, and I would go to the university (if there was one), go to the chamber of commerce, look up the women's club, and from these sources the same names would keep coming up, no matter what size the city."

The names were of people who had been involved in the community. Identifying likely supervisors, she first eliminated people who "like to have their names in the paper, but don't like to work."

From the outside, the S-D assignments looked especially interesting. People told her she was lucky to travel, as if it were a vacation, she laughed, "but it wasn't that way at all. But it was a great experience." And one that gave her the opportunity to prove herself to the New York-based firm. Impressed, S-D offered Tommie a full-time position opening a new office for them in Chicago.

What a temptation – and a wrenching decision – the S-D offer must have posed for Tommie is hard to fully appreciate. Newly widowed and eminently practical, she saw a regular paycheck with a reliable employer as very appealing. Affiliation with a major New York market research firm also had its allure. But leaving the city that had been her home all her adult life and taking Frank Jr. away from everything that was comforting and familiar – friends, school, family, and community – right after he'd lost his father seemed both unkind and unwise.

So she surely considered her options carefully. While Fort Harrison employment was one, the S-D offer was also intriguing. Confiding in her brother-in-law, Charlie Walker, Tommie asked for his advice.

Charlie, who no doubt felt a family responsibility to look out for his brother's widow and son, gave it. He told Tommie to make a list of what S-D offered her that she couldn't do for herself. "I thought they had offered me the world,"

she said. But in comparing the lists, the only thing they offered that she didn't have was a teletype. "Charlie asked, 'Do you need a teletype?' I didn't know, I thought so." On second thought, maybe not.

Charlie pointed out that Tommie had already been successful conducting surveys part time and convinced her that if she devoted herself full time to Walker Research Services, she could "do better than that." She didn't need to go to work for S-D or anyone else for that matter: she could do it all herself. She just needed to get an office and get her name out. And while he told her he wouldn't loan her money, she recounted, "he did so," and also gave her "very much encouragement."

"Those offers had flattered my ego so much," Tommie later recalled of the S-D conversations. "He got me back down where I belong." Rather than apply at Fort Harrison or accept a job that would take her to Chicago and away from her own small but successful business, she decided to apply herself to Walker Research Services, full time and in earnest. "In fact, about ninety hours a week," she later said, only slightly exaggerating.

Charlie Walker owned a dry cleaning and laundry business in Indianapolis; he agreed to have his bookkeeper manage the books and handle payroll for Tommie. And in a tongue-in-cheek agreement, he accepted the role of chairman of the board for one dollar a year – "but I never gave him the dollar," Tommie smiled. "Pay day for him became an office joke because he usually flung the $1 bill back on a table, grinning, 'If that's all you can pay me, you need it worse than I do.'"

Stewart-Dougall Surveys found someone else to open their Chicago office, on bustling Michigan Avenue. But the Windy City competition was stiff and included Market Facts and Elrick & Lavidge, which employed "native Chicago people who lived in the suburbs and knew the market," according to Tommie. S-D failed with its Midwest expansion and closed the Chicago office in a year and a half.

Reflecting on her close call, Tommie later grew philosophical about the incident: "[People] get carried away with something that looks so good, and through no fault of their own, it doesn't materialize. And so instead of being in your hometown or where you're known – where the grass is greener in the first place – you have uprooted yourself and replanted yourself in a foreign market someplace... In the early days, farm animals, especially horses, would lean over the fence to eat the grass on the other side of the fence in the other field, which fits people pretty well. We think the grass is never green enough around our own feet, but way over there, it is. It's always the same grass."

Grieving for Frank and scrambling to pay the bills, Tommie was ill-prepared for the next blow, which came just six weeks after her husband's funeral. On March 4, 1952, her mother, Bertha Alice Cole Stubbs, died of colon cancer at St. Vincent's Hospital on Fall Creek Boulevard in Indianapolis. All three of Bertha's daughters – Ruth, Mid, and Tommie – were at her bedside. Bertha had remained in the house on East Kessler where she and Wes Cole had moved just ten days before his death, remarried, and then been widowed again. In the East Kessler house, according to her obituary, she "had taken in many a struggling young person, assisted him in his education and given him a start in life. Her home was a gathering place for the young people in the neighborhood, and she baked countless cookies and cakes and made candy for them."

Her obituary went on to say that she had been a role model to her children, "a friend to the friendless who imparted her charitable instincts," as was clearly evident in Tommie. Bertha's long list of community service included Red Cross work: "Mrs. Stubbs was one of the first volunteer workers at the blood donor center during World War II. She also did solicitation for the Red Cross fund campaigns." She belonged to a travel-study club and a literary club. And apparently referring to her early adulthood, the obituary reported, "Her intense interest in the welfare of others and her desire to improve living conditions led her to aid in the formation of the Tipton County Home Economics Club."

Sympathetically, the newspaper also noted, "Mrs. Stubbs had surmounted much sorrow in her life," referring to the deaths of her sons and son-in-law. It was a description that could have applied to Tommie, too. Thinking back on her mother's death she said, "My mother died six weeks after Frank did. That was really hard. I gave up the two people who were nearest and dearest to me within six weeks. I hadn't recovered from Frank and certainly not financially when I had to go through this again."

Dr. Bob, the minister at Broadway Methodist Church, where both Bertha and Tommie were members, suggested to Tommie that Frank Jr. and Tom help where they could with Bertha's funeral arrangements to spare her handling another single-handedly so soon. Recalling the inclement weather in which he had conducted Frank's graveside service just a few weeks earlier, she assured Dr. Bob that he didn't need to make the fifty-mile journey to Tipton to do the same for her mother.

She later recounted his reaction: "He said, 'Oh no, I wouldn't let you down, Tommie. I wouldn't do that. Besides, I got it all set up. I've got a young married couple there who just think they aren't going to make it. They are thinking about separating and I'm counseling with them. I just invited them to ride along today – it's a good time to talk to them. We'll just talk about that all the way up and all the way back. My time wouldn't be wasted at all.' That was the kind he was."

In the following weeks, Tommie dealt with two overwhelming factors: Not only were there raw emotions to manage, but also she was still trying to organize her financial affairs. In April, that effort included tax filings for Walker Research Services, which had previously listed Frank Walker Sr. as a partner. In 1952, with his father gone, young Frank stepped into those shoes, signing the tax forms with the name he and his father shared.

On a happier note, she received word that she had been elected to membership in the Indianapolis Athletic Club by the board of directors. In the early 1950s it was probably rare for the club to elect a single woman to membership, and Tommie was likely gratified with the news.

It wasn't until May 11 that Tommie at last sat down to write a letter to Dr. Bob. With her spiritual advisor and friend, she could confide her feelings and truly be herself, so it was especially revealing of her character that, even then, her thoughts were almost exclusively of others. "For weeks I have wanted to sit down and chat with you...and express to you our appreciation for all the help you have given us these past few weeks, which should almost be referred to now as months," she began. Then, clearly missing those who meant so much to her, including her older son who was in the service, she allowed herself the only hint of self-focus: "What better time than now, at the close of my first Mother's Day without my Mother, my husband, and Tom?"

She immediately changed the subject, complimenting Dr. Bob and sharing with him the praise of others for his comments at Frank's funeral. She reported that she had spent the day at the Indiana State Girls School at Claremont to attend the dedication of a new school building and was able "to see my 14 daughters – the Camp Fire Girls." In her picturesque way, Tommie explained that these young girls largely came from dysfunctional homes and were struggling due to poor parenting. They were, Tommie wrote, "for the majority, paying a price because their Mothers did not add any one of the four sides to their homes." Afterward, she had spent time with Frank, who had given his mother a corsage to wear to church, and received a long-distance call from Tom.

The day had been crowded with activity and filled with the companionship of people she cared about. Yet in her letter to Dr. Bob, the aching loneliness she felt in losing two of the most beloved and important people in her life, in such quick succession, was poignantly clear, as was her gratitude to her sons for their thoughtfulness.

Just a month later, Tommie was back in church, but this time in Hinsdale, Illinois, for a joyful occasion. Tom and Dottie were married on June 15, a celebration Tommie and Frank Sr. had eagerly anticipated together. It would have been completely characteristic for Tommie to spend her first-born's special day focused exclusively on the young couple, who were returning to Baltimore where Tom was in military training. At the back of the church after

the ceremony, she bade farewell to her new "daughter-in-love," as she would thereafter call Dottie and, later, Frank's wife. The two women shared a private and very emotional moment that Dottie would always remember.

Funerals and weddings and adjusting to an entirely new way of life had been filling much of Tommie's time and thought in the first months of 1952. But she was also throwing herself into building Walker Research Services into a thriving business that would support her and Frank. The year was a turning point, as she later told an interviewer. "There were two ways to stay alive – physically and mentally – and operating my own business was an opportunity to learn from the neck up," she said. She was never happier than when she was building her business and learning something new.

Yet, she asserted, "I always acted like a woman, even being concerned about how straight my stocking seams were." She was keenly aware that she was balancing her natural femininity with the need to establish her credentials in a world dominated by men. "It was easy to sense, when seated with ten men at a board of directors meeting, the man who believed in me and the man who thought, 'Who does she think she is? My wife doesn't do things like that.' While these feelings showed, it didn't really bother me personally because I was engrossed in what I was doing and knew what I could accomplish as an individual."

It had only been two years since the Grand Rapids advertising club introduction, but in that time, life experience and growing professional acumen had matured her. She had gained even more confidence in her business knowledge, and her accomplishments were multiplying. She accepted more speaking engagements and took on more clients, increasing both her income and her already notable reputation.

In her community, people certainly knew about Tommie, although her unconventional profession baffled some of them. John Mutz, Frank's classmate at Broad Ripple High School, was aware that his mother spoke of Tommie Walker "with some reverence" because Tommie owned her own business. When John met Tommie for the first time, she was in her kitchen,

survey forms from that business strewn over the table. In response to his inquiry, Tommie explained to John what she was doing. He was then in a competitive race for class president, and Frank suggested that Tommie might be able to give John some pointers to help him defeat his opponent, a star athlete.

"I am a stutterer and have been most my life," John later said. "Tommie was not only thoughtful but also had a lot of savvy about the persona one projects to the outside world. She coached me to be sure of myself and to project self-confidence." In the first ballot, John and his competitor tied; in the second, John lost by just a few votes. But he had gained a strong advocate. "From that point forward, I would occasionally show her my speeches or other presentations for feedback. She had a good intuitive sense of how things sound when they come from you."

John Mutz, who became Frank's lifelong friend, won other contests: He served as Indiana's lieutenant governor, state representative, state senator, and the president of Lilly Endowment, one of the largest family foundations in the United States. He never forgot the good-natured, kind-hearted help his friend's mother gave him at her kitchen table. Decades later, when he convened a group of women to discuss leadership on corporate boards, he asked them to identify women who had been pioneers and role models in that endeavor. He was gratified to hear a familiar name in their response: Tommie Walker.

Late in the autumn of 1952, Tommie delivered a speech to the JAC, an advertising club in Cincinnati. She told the group she had a "small market research organization in Indianapolis and serviced primarily the Indianapolis shopping area" and additionally was the central regional manager for S-D Surveys, Inc., of New York. Clearly, declining the Chicago opportunity had not soured her relationship with this important client.

In her homey yet savvy observations, Tommie instantly put her audience at

ease and established her enthusiasm for her work. Then, by way of illustrating current trends in food stores, she painted a picture of her early life – a picture depicted on other occasions, but this time more detailed and tailored to her listeners.

"Let's just talk about marketing and advertising in general and in a very informal manner," she began. "I'd like telling you some of the very interesting problems that I have been privileged to work with and about some of the very delightful people whom I've met." She set the stage with this: "It would probably be difficult for most of you in this room to believe that self-service supermarkets weren't always in existence. Now the customer makes the decision himself on what he wants to buy," based on everything from placement on shelves to packaging, she went on.

But, she continued, "In the olden days, I could say in my grandmother's days, but I don't have to really go back that far for I can say as a child I remember riding in the old family carriage to the general store. And it was always such fun, while my mother was talking over each item with the storekeeper, to go along the front of the counter and look in all the barrels, for displayed along the front of the counter was always a barrel of white sugar, one with flour, another filled with crackers. And while if we wanted, say, cider vinegar, kerosene, or potatoes, I'd get to go in the back of the store with the owner. And there'd always be the store cat that slept during the day and served as night watchman at night, because packaging was almost unheard of for food items thirty, forty years ago.

"I can also recall seeing the old city slicker with his derby hat, striped vest, cutaway coat out from the mail-order house in Chicago, standing around, watching what my mother was choosing in yard goods... Of course, the big city salesman was doing a market research study, although he didn't know that he was – that is, they didn't call it that, and he was a bit too late because now, market research is done in advance of the product on the market and, in most cases, is continued to be studied for improvements so that you, the customer, may get a better buy for your dollar."

Deftly she segued her audience from nostalgic past to the present and to her own work in the blossoming field of market research, employing her sense of humor and attention to detail to convey the breadth of her efforts: "One of our staff is in Kansas City setting up a cracker job. Now it isn't enough for an ordinary cracker just to come in an ordinary box, but it's got to be packaged in lots of little boxes inside of a big box, and then inside of the little boxes; they gotta be divided up into cellophane packages so that you don't have to eat stale crackers any more. But think what a problem that is for the cracker people! They gotta know how many crackers you usually eat at a time, and how often you feel like crackers, and whether they're salty enough or too salty, and if they're thin enough to satisfy you."

She went on to list tests for dry cereal (with families); coffee (with church, school, and sorority groups – and she described the methodology she used); cakes; shampoos and after-shave lotions; "dentifrice;" and her meeting with a professor of marketing of "one of our leading universities who was establishing a farm panel." Shifting from the specifics, she assessed for her audience where the industry was headed and why, accurately predicting the rise of the power of individual preferences.

"...you, the customer, are the judges and the jury rather than the old-time way of the president and the chairman of the board making these decisions," she emphasized. After giving examples of her work that surely had her audience laughing and eager for more, she ended by saying, "I could go on for hours here and have you all put to sleep and still not tell you all of the studies that we are privileged to be a part of in a year's time. But market research is thought of as being stuffy and tedious and boring, and I'd like you to know that I think it's just the opposite and you are responsible for my feeling that way because you are a very important person and your opinion counts."

There it was again, her "your opinion counts" pronouncement, the crystallization of the industry, her work and why it was valuable. Those three words would take on more and more significance as she built Walker Research.

Since her husband's death, Tommie had tried to fill the role of both parents for young Frank. Sunday nights had become special for the two of them: "We would have dinner and watch the Ed Sullivan Show and talk," he later recalled. On December 31, 1952, Tommie sat in their home, writing a letter to Frank Jr. It was the last day of a tumultuous year, one punctuated by success and growth and joy, yet filled with loss and heartache, fear and loneliness. She was only forty-four years old, still youthful by many standards. But on this New Year's Eve, the occasion she and Frank had traditionally spent reflecting on happy times and planning their future, she looked back on the past and realized just how much had changed.

It was an especially emotional evening for Tommie not only because she keenly felt Frank Sr.'s absence, but also because it was Frank Jr.'s eighteenth birthday. And in typical Tommie fashion, she started by talking not about herself but about her son. "Today you became a man!" she exclaimed, going on to elaborate on what that meant for him. Then, the emotion of the evening overwhelming her, she wrote, "Tonight, as you stood before the mirror modeling your Dad's sport coats, choosing what you'd wear to your very first all night New Year's Eve Party...I realized what a likeness you were of your Father...

"For a moment well to be real honest, for sometime after you left I felt I couldn't bear to spend this first New Year's Eve alone. After all, to lose one's husband by a heart attack while driving a car, then five weeks later have to kiss my sweet cancer eaten Mother Good-bye for ever – and send your brother off to the army all within six months time, seemed almost too great a burden to bear... Those were my thoughts."

The letter was a stream of consciousness, perhaps cathartic for Tommie, who was aware that her younger son had earned the right to be treated as an adult and to know the financial circumstances of the household. She told him that she realized it was time for her to "start making my dreams and plans," made possible in part by the life insurance policy Frank had taken on himself. That policy ensured that young Frank would get a college education and allowed Tommie to keep a car and their home.

"Yes, these and many other material things we are enjoying through the power of life insurance," she emphasized, "none of which we would have had because we had never been able to quite get out of debt."

Her pride in her young son and their strong bond were evident when she wrote, "When you started to leave tonight, you turned back with a worried look. You, too, felt my loneliness. But when you come in, early this morning,...I want you to fall asleep knowing that my evening has not been a sad one... for I am starting a new phase of my life, too – just as you are... We're born into this world and soon as we are old enough to understand, we know that someday we shall leave it by death. But let's you and me leave it better for having been a living part of it."

Strongly influenced by her mother's charitable and giving nature, Tommie was clearly passing her value system and her generosity of spirit to her children. Her letter dealt with the practical aspects of life, but it also overflowed with genuine optimism about a future she could imagine but not foresee. And it left no doubt in Frank's mind of her feelings.

"Happy Birthday Frank. I love you dearly!" she signed off, then added a post script: "Awaken me when you come in – I want to hear all about the fun you had."

It would take more than the stroke of midnight to put 1952 behind her. During 1953, even as Tommie continued to build her business and accept speaking engagements, the losses of the previous year were just beneath the surface. And those around her knew it. William T. Owens, director of public relations for a company in Louisville, responded to a letter from Tommie with what was probably a commonly held sentiment. "I know what a great comfort those fine children of yours, Dr. Pierce, and your many warm friends must have been during the trying months through which you've passed," he wrote. "Your courage and your determination to become further interested in outside activities are simply additional evidence of the very fine person you are."

One development in 1953, however, helped lift Tommie's spirits: Tom and Dottie announced they were expecting their first child. When David Frank Walker was born on November 16, Tommie became an unabashedly proud grandmother, excited with the news and eager to share it. Her enthusiasm didn't diminish as her other grandchildren arrived; each one was special to her.

Her growing family and expanding business might have been factors in Tommie's decision to sever her relationship with S-D Surveys in 1953: the long-time association was likely taking too much time away from her other priorities. The New York firm seemed sad to lose her. In a memo to the field staff, an S-D executive announced, "with great regret that Mrs. 'Tommie' Walker finds it impossible to continue representing S-D Surveys as Central Region Manager."

Everywhere she went, Tommie readily won people over. Following a speech to the Ad Club in Terre Haute, Indiana, Clark Smith wrote to her saying, "You probably did not hear the comments on your graciousness and the pleasure the members had in being with you." After her October 14 presentation to the Advertising Club of Toledo, provocatively titled "What I Know about You," she received a letter from the program chairman that read, in part, "In spite of the breakdown of facilities at the Plaza Hotel, I hope you enjoyed your visit to Toledo on Wednesday. I am sure you could not have enjoyed it more than the members of the Ad Club and I, particularly, enjoyed having you here."

She related to young people as easily as to her contemporaries, making her guest lectures at universities popular. After she spoke to a sales management course at Butler University in Indianapolis on February 18, 1954, student Alistair J. Stuart wrote to tell her, "After enjoying your talk...I would be lacking in all courtesy if I did not let you know how much I thought of it... The subject matter was very interesting indeed but your presentation of it was such that you need have no qualms about following Dr. Borden or anyone else, on any program whatsoever. I found it refreshing to listen to a lady lecturer and it was invigorating to listen to such an interesting and pleasantly delivered discussion..."

The next day she spoke to a class at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. In his thank-you note, assistant professor J. A. Ritchey said, "I want to express my appreciation to you for the very splendid talk which you gave my class in Sales last Friday.... Your talk to the class was perfect. You illustrated many points that we had discussed previously in class, thereby tying together the theoretical and the practical...There were many favorable comments made during the following class period."

Gratitude for her wisdom and generosity came from many places, but none would have been more meaningful to Tommie than that expressed by those she loved. Frank was now in college at DePauw University, an hour's drive away, where he was living in a fraternity house. The letter he wrote his mother on November 3, 1954, surely warmed her. He said he considered himself "a mighty lucky guy," and he would take walks during which he reflected on that fact. "To be able to think back over my life and never have any sad thoughts what so ever. By this I mean, always the greatest family a guy could ask for. Never knowing what it was to be hungry or not to have a nice clean bed to sleep in...And after these walks I am always ready to come back and study for all it's worth."

After Tommie visited him at DePauw, he wrote, "Some of the mothers can come down here and be with their sons for the whole weekend and not have any fun. But not mine. I know that you are always happy and can take care of yourself.... Being a son of Tommie Walker I seem to get a big kick out of doing things for others."

Mother. Entrepreneur. Public speaker. Community leader. Role model. Tommie was devoting her time to others in a balancing act that only a woman of her energy, enthusiasm, and common sense could pull off. It had been fifteen years since she conducted her first research survey, and in that time she had developed a level of expertise in market research and an extensive client list that not only generated ongoing speech requests but also attracted newspaper reporters and magazine editors. Her innate ability to quickly assess situations and understand human behavior was an enormous asset in building her business, and her experiences simply fortified her wisdom. She once told

an audience, "Why, I could easily write a book thick as Webster's dictionary on human interest stories – for interviewing over 200,000 people, one hears a lot."

From the podium and across the interview table, Tommie shared her knowledge and her philosophy in memorable ways.

Her speech in early 1955 to the Peru, Indiana, Kiwanis Club elicited this thank you from the club president, A. F. Pate: "Because of the clarity of your explanations and expressions I feel that everyone in attendance at our meeting has a much clearer conception of what a research service consists of than they have had heretofore. Today I have had many people call me to express their appreciation of your talk."

The audience apparently also knew a lot more about Tommie's observations of women. "Mrs. Walker told how important women are to the home," the Peru Tribune reported. "They must know how to be professional in various fields of activity, including doctor, lawyer, nurse, laundress, cook, banker, teacher, minister. Above all, she said, the woman must be able to be a charming hostess to everyone who enters her door and she also must be a sales manager. Qualifications for these are self-discipline, to be decisive, give credit to others, take it easy, and have enthusiasm."

Tommie didn't miss an opportunity to endorse community service, either, the newspaper said. "Importance of women in the community also was outlined... Women are the executives of the home, she said, and can be leaders as well. Everyone is important in the community. Service, not wealth, is the thing that counts."

A 1955 article in the *Indianapolis Times* said of her, "Tommie Walker has more irons in the fire than we have space to tell about 'em... She comes up bubbling with a wit and a will for the next thing, be it a difficult survey, volunteer services or a party." Tommie was serving multiple volunteer leadership roles for the Association for Mental Health, prompting the reporter to write, "Tommie's tireless and ingenious mind will be whirling with a hundred ideas for the

12-month-a-year work as state chairman of volunteers for mental health. At the same time the attractive, dark-haired matron will look you gaily in the eye and declare, 'I'm still a housewife and mother.'"

Confessing she addressed postcards while stopped at a traffic light or started a letter to her son while waiting for a luncheon guest to arrive, Tommie told her interviewer that each night before she fell asleep she tested herself with a question, "Have I done something for someone else and have I learned something new today?" Then, with characteristic humility, she admitted that some nights she passed the test and other times she didn't.

Her calendar in 1955 was full: She spoke at the National Selected Morticians conference, following Dr. Norman Vincent Peale on the program; was elected president of the American Marketing Association, Indiana Chapter; was named Ad Woman of the Year by the Indianapolis Advertising Club (an honor she received again in 1973); and attended the Republican Dinner Rally at the Indiana State Fairgrounds Coliseum, where the guest speaker was Richard M. Nixon, then vice president of the United States. And in August, she welcomed her first granddaughter, Tom's and Dottie's daughter Karen.

Late that fall, she received a note, typed on Sigma Chi Fraternity letterhead, that read simply, "Good luck. Make a good speech. We both love you. us" It was from Frank, who was including his then-girlfriend and future wife, Bev Trudgen, in sending his mother good wishes as she prepared to speak at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. On November 18, the Muncie Evening Press reported, "Mrs. Tommy (sic) Walker, president of Walker Research Service of Indianapolis, spent an hour this morning explaining to Ball State students, faculty and guests just how researchers go about discovering the habits of American consumers." Her five tips were to "develop self-discipline and learn to control your own time; be decisive; give credit to others; take it easy – develop a sense of humor; and maintain enthusiasm."

Her talk was the tenth annual Alma W. Studebaker Memorial Lecture and

opened the thirty-second annual business education conference on campus. In the article, she is pictured with three professors, each with a doctorate degree, all listening to Tommie Walker, high school graduate. It must have been a quietly proud day for her.

As her client work grew, so did her experiences, many of them still underscoring her femininity. In 1956 she appeared as a model for the Ball Brothers Company sales brochure after completing a study on jar lids for the corporation. In April that year, she chaired the Ladies Day of the Indianapolis Advertising Club, an event the *Indianapolis Times* covered with a photo of Tommie pinning a corsage on the guest speaker. In September, she proudly took the role of mother of the groom as Frank married Beverly Wray Trudgen. And the following year, after he graduated from DePauw University, she wished her second son well when he received an officer commission and went into the U.S. Air Force.

Since Frank's death five years earlier, Tommie had been working "all out" on her business and she was reaping the benefits. Even though the company's billings had not yet reached $40,000 in 1957, she had an impressive list of clients with interesting research projects and a staff of sixty part-time interviewers to help do the work.

In seeking employees, Tommie had a clear idea of who would be successful, as described by one reporter: "A good interviewer must show poise and dignity and be able to lose herself in another person's problem. She must have an inquiring mind and be able to probe on her own without having to follow a list of questions. She must not be opinionated and when a respondent expresses an opinion, the interviewer must not show surprise or disapproval. There is also value in the 'Gracie Allen approach.' This involves feigning ignorance or lack of understanding to 'draw out' a respondent."

The "Gracie Allen approach," so named for the popular and often zany comedienne, was a favorite of Tommie's, and she used it frequently herself. But it was simply a technique: there was nothing vacuous about her or her interviewers. A company brochure said of them, "Walker Research is

especially proud of its interviewers. Attracted entirely from upper-middle income groups, these women are far above average in intelligence and initiative. Devoted to family and community, they participate actively in civic and church affairs. To Walker Research they contribute a wide range of useful talents."

Stories about interviewers' experiences were legion and usually funny. One involved a group of women who had gone to a small town south of Indianapolis "in a big Cadillac" to conduct the usual door-to-door calls. They aroused the suspicion of local police – there had been a rash of thefts in the area, targeting television sets – and were hauled to the station for questioning. When the group's explanations failed, the chief of police called Tommie to verify what they were doing. "They told me later and showed me how he squirmed around while I explained, giving him a lesson in market research and telling him all about it," Tommie recounted. "He'd light a cigarette, then put it out and squirm, then put his feet on the desk. After we hung up, he looked at my interviewers and said, 'My God! Do you have to work for her? She never stops talking!'"

Privately, Tommie said her interviewers were all "women who didn't want to go dead from the neck up" and wanted to work part time so they could devote the rest of their day to their family. But "family always comes first," she insisted. A potential staff member's husband had to approve the arrangement before Tommie would hire the applicant.

On television, popular programs such as "Ozzie and Harriet" and "Father Knows Best" were depicting families with a working father, a stay-at-home but very resourceful mother, and thriving children. But a different picture was forming on the viewer side of the TV. At the end of the Second World War only 10 percent of married women with children under the age of six held jobs or were seeking them, but by 1950 the pace of women entering the workforce had tripled over that of the prewar era. While Tommie honored the traditional family arrangement, she was offering interesting, rewarding work for the growing number of women seeking it.

A number of factors likely contributed to Tommie's decision to move Walker Research Services offices in 1957. With scores of part-time employees and the attending paperwork, she might have outgrown the old location, which she had once shared with her husband, Frank. She also might have anticipated further growth for her company. The postwar baby boom was at its peak that year (although no one knew that yet, of course), and clients, mindful of their customers' demands and gaining respect for market research during the 1950s, would be turning to her industry more and more for the information they required to make sound business decisions.

She was probably also thinking through a new idea she had – one she would act on in 1958 – and realized she would need more space to implement it. Her first step was to acquire a "cozy bungalow" at 1930 East Forty-Sixth Street in Indianapolis. It wouldn't take long for her to recognize that building was inadequate for her needs and to add the building next door, 1924 East Forty-Sixth Street.

Tommie's revolutionary idea had taken shape as she observed the manner in which many companies conducted market research. It often took place in the company's own facilities, overseen by the firm's own employees. Tommie surmised that such research was not objective and the reported results flawed. What if, she wondered, consumer research could be conducted in a thoroughly modern and independent facility, by objective, trained personnel?

After studying and promoting her idea, Tommie opened the country's first research consumer test center in her new location. A Walker Research brochure described the test kitchen, saying it was "as modern as tomorrow," and asserted that the test center gave Walker Research "unusual freedom in timing of tests and selection of panel groups – as to race, sex, religion, age bracket, education, economic level, community of interest, etc.... Here, in friendly, home-like surroundings, completely free from annoying distractions and conflicts of interest, Walker Research conducts food tests under the most favorable circumstances possible. Thus, individual preferences are established with a rare degree of accuracy."

Completely Tommie's innovation, conceived by this woman who had pioneered the market research industry and honed her innate talents for keen observation and drawing out interviewees, the consumer test center was an instant success. The center quickly was booked weeks in advance. "The idea of bringing groups of respondents to a center was so successful that expansion to a second facility soon became necessary," a company brochure reported.

Tommie had other ideas, including the concept of obtaining a constant supply of fresh consumer opinions and a broad range of information by rotating research territories. She might have been able to test some of her ideas while working with the Indiana University School of Business in Bloomington. Although they were the clients seeking her knowledge, the professors also taught Tommie a few things, if only by accident, which she passed on to one of her friends. "I remember that their idea of a rush job was 'by the end of the semester.' I learned after opening my big mouth and laughing at first and saying 'that's lots of time,' not to say that. Then we could accept the study and get it done as well as all the other ones that were waiting."

After one exhausting, all-day meeting "with six Ph.D.'s," she said, she was racing back to Indianapolis from Bloomington, mindful she had a party to attend. Her humorous retelling of what happened on that drive went like this: "I was a widow then and dating, and I wanted very much to get back, and a state cop passed me and stopped me. He said, 'Where are you going and where have you been?' When I said where I'd been, with all these Ph.D.'s, he said, 'That's enough to make anybody pass on a hill with somebody else coming, but the governor of Indiana would like for you to live. That is our mission in being here.' I felt so dressed down. I went home to my party and all I could think about was, 'Well, maybe I wasn't about to live and the governor wants me to live.' I'd never had anybody so high up want me to live."

By the end of 1958, Tommie had two more grandchildren – Steven Frank, born in 1957 to Frank and Bev Walker on New Year's Eve, his father's birthday; and Michael, born to Tom and Dottie Walker on November 16, 1958. Tommie's company was too young, and anyone's ability to foresee the future too inexact, for the family to know that one day Steve would become the third generation to lead the company. That would all be revealed as time went on.

For now, Tommie was busy applying her years of experience and her creative thinking to more innovations. In 1959, while serving as chair of the Women's Council of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, she established a service she called "Day of Adventure" for the wives of men visiting Indianapolis to attend conventions and conferences there. It was a clever way of recruiting women to test new products in her consumer research center and then rewarding them with fashion shows, film presentations, shopping excursions, and luncheons. And it was likely one of the reasons she received an outstanding achievement honor in a "Salute to Women Who Work."

She received something she prized far above that, though, when on November 9, Frank and Bev welcomed their second child and Tommie's fifth grandchild, Leah Rae. After all, family always came first. The birth of a new baby and the closing of a decade – two events that would tend to focus Tommie's attention on the future.

So it was natural that, as the year wound down, she was mapping a strategy for Walker Research, which now employed seventy-five people who conducted scores of market research projects and interviewed thousands of consumers over the course of a year. Her consumer test center was thriving and drawing the attention of other researchers. Generously, she allowed them to visit, observe her concepts, and even copy them, believing it would be beneficial to the market research industry.

Now in her early fifties, widowed and with two grown sons who had families of their own, the ever-practical Tommie would have been thinking about the future of her company and her own eventual retirement. If Walker Research was going to continue to grow, she would need an infusion of youth and talent, and she knew exactly where she would find it.

Frank Jr. was now twenty-five and serving in the United States Air Force, but he had technically become a partner of the company at age seventeen after his father died. Tom had completed his military service and, deciding not to join the family business, had begun working with Indiana Bell Telephone

Company. There he built a highly successful career and became an executive. But Frank's plans had long been tied to Walker Research. Before he finished college, he and Tommie had agreed that he'd eventually join the company. Now, Frank later recalled, "I was ready to get back and she was ready to have me."

In an exchange of letters during the autumn of 1959, mother and son discussed whether their circumstances applied to regulations that would permit Frank to be released from active duty in order to join Walker Research. Frank wrote to say, "The Air Force Regulation 36-22 is very familiar to me as I have been studying the many points it brings out for the past few weeks." He'd already spoken to his superiors about the regulation, which governed the conditions, such as the need for a service member to return to a family business for its survival, under which an officer could be released from active duty.

Frank thought his commanding officer was perhaps overly optimistic, given his own interpretation of the regulations, and was mindful that after he (Frank) submitted his request, it would have to go "all the way to Washington (as near as I can figure)" for approval. But he was eager to begin his career at Walker Research and suggested a path toward getting approval for him to end his military service in order to "return to the business." Closing the letter with family news ("Steven moved to a big bed last weekend... Bev is getting baby clothes ready and I have been rebuilding and repainting the baby furniture"), he urged Tommie to "write or call as soon as you have had time to think things over."

On February 28, 1960, Frank wrote his mother from Finley Air Force Station in North Dakota. A government initiative to reduce the number of military officers had expedited his discharge, and he was now able to move forward with his plans. "Dear Tommie:" he began, addressing his mother by her first name rather than his customary "Mom." "This letter will serve as my official acceptance of your very wonderful offer of employment. This start sounds somewhat formal but there are a few things which I would like to comment on in an official way."

After clarifying his position (director of sales) and start date (June 6) and covering several other details, Frank at last touched on the financial arrangement. "The salary, I believe, is very (if not more than) fair," he wrote with some humility, and then, to assure his mother he didn't take the job for granted, he added, "And let me say right now I plan to earn every penny of it."

In closing, he confided, "I have been writing and rewriting this for a week and mentally long before that..." The strong family bond that was a hallmark of Tommie's life was apparent in his closing paragraph. "We do owe a great deal to Dad – and I am also very, very proud of my mother and what she has done. I am also happy that this extra special business woman wants me for a partner – a real partner and not a son that has to be put somewhere in the business."

In anticipation of his arrival, Tommie renovated some space on the upper floor of the bungalow that served as the company headquarters. The sloped ceiling of his office made it difficult for him to stand upright anywhere except in the center of the room, but he had his own desk and a separate, exterior stairway, enabling him to come and go without disturbing the "ladies" who were working or participating in studies on the main floor.

Frank reported for work in June 1960 as planned. After twenty years of growing her own company, earning national recognition for her contributions to the industry, and garnering awards for her community leadership, Tommie Walker would now have a genuine business partner, in the person of her son.

Given her intuition and her knowledge, Tommie might have had some idea of just how much her business was about to change and challenge her. When a reporter, many years later, asked her to compare projects in the 1940s with those of the 1960s, she said that they became "more complicated." Initially she didn't design the questionnaires. Then business and industry determined they could get more guidance for executives and cover greater problems, she continued, "and so that's how the scope of the studies changed. And it became more challenging to me and to the respondents.

"When I started building questionnaires myself, I'd find that a typical comment

from a client would be, 'I don't want to know all that, Mrs. Walker. All I want to know is what price to charge.' As if you could ask one question and get it... This is something that really caused me to grow, because I had to sell the idea that you couldn't just go out and ask one question and get anything that was worth it."

Emphasizing the truth of the adage that you had to ask the client about the problem and how he was going to use the information gathered, she ended on a light note: "Hopefully the information won't just be put in the bottom drawer." Tommie didn't want to do what she referred to as "interesting research" because it inevitably led nowhere. No, she often said, she wanted to conduct meaningful research that would result in actionable information.

With the complexities of market research expanding and client demands evolving, Tommie needed the talents and ideas that Frank brought to her company.

Frank had been back less than a year – barely time for Tommie to feel that things were settled and going smoothly – when in March 1961 Charlie Walker died of a heart attack, as had his brother Frank Sr. nine years earlier. Many years later, Tommie still clearly remembered getting word of her brother-in-law's death. She linked it with other bad news she'd received in her lifetime to explain her own reaction.

"I was a guest in my minister, Dr. Bob's, home when they called and said Charlie had died of a heart attack," she told an interviewer. Some thought she was overly cautious because when she traveled, she always let her family know where she was. But experience had formed that habit, she said. "You have to remember that I've been called so many times. When my dad died in the middle of the night, and then later, when my brother died I was stopped by the state police over in Pennsylvania on my way to the World's Fair. I've had enough of those things happen that I feel it's worth the price of a phone call just to say where I am."

Charlie Walker was "the most wonderful person in the world," Tommie felt – a caring, sensitive, and intuitive man, his daughter-in-law Donna Walker

would later recall, and the wise business advisor who had guided Tommie through the difficult early years of widowhood. She would miss him for all his fine qualities.

Now, fortunately, she could turn to Frank to think through business challenges or assess new opportunities. Tommie had faith in her son's abilities for many reasons, not the least of which was the fact that from the earliest days of the company, he had participated in studies and helped with virtually any task at hand. So it wasn't long before he and Tommie conferred on who would handle which assignments and sales calls and how studies and surveys would be conducted. Some of their decisions were based on various client nuances: If a company was clearly conservative in its viewpoint on women, for instance, Frank would take the lead. Tommie was realistic about the biases women faced but unintimidated in professional settings. After more than twenty years in her business, she knew what she was talking about.

One business acquaintance observed in a newspaper article, "Part of Tommie's success lies in the fact that she thinks like a businessman without losing her femininity. When she presents a program of recommendations to a group of business executives, she is all business – brief and to the point. There is absolutely not time out for primping, giggling, or apologizing." Said another friend, "Tommie is always giving a free talk or doing some kind of free community work. She probably does too much of it for her company's good."

But Tommie didn't think so, reported the article, adding, "[she] smiles and says it is like casting bread upon the waters. Some person who has heard me at a free lecture later comes to us with a job to do."

Charlie Walker's death and Frank Walker Jr.'s arrival signaled the beginning of a new chapter in Tommie's life and in her company. She was uncommonly good at foreseeing consumer trends and understanding behavior, but she could not have fully anticipated the momentous changes that would take place in the next dozen years.

The 1960s would be a decade of growth for both her family (her sixth grandchild, Linda, born to Tom and Dottie, arrived on March 10, 1962) and for Walker Research, of community leadership and personal fulfillment for Tommie, and of momentous events in the world. It was a decade of political assassinations, escalating wars, and student demonstrations; the Woodstock Festival and the arrival of the Beatles; the introduction of the first birth control pill and the first heart transplant; marches on Washington and a walk on the moon.

As an auspicious beginning to this unpredictable decade, company revenues for 1960 exceeded $100,000 for the first time. That was a tipping point for Walker Research, which immediately began growing at a faster rate. Complementing Tommie's talents, Frank developed full-service research capabilities for clients, who still frequently learned of the company by word of mouth. To meet the growing demands for their expertise, the company added employees and interviewers to the rolls, including fifteen home economists. Ever the communicator, Tommie launched an internal newsletter to keep the growing workforce informed.

And she continued to be in demand as a speaker and community leader, often as a trailblazer for other women. In 1962, she became the only woman on the board of directors of the Better Business Bureau and the following year became the board secretary. When the *Indianapolis Times* newspaper ran a series of articles to inspire young women and men "on their way up" by demonstrating how successful businessmen and businesswomen became successful, she was the only woman of the twenty-five business leaders interviewed for the series.

They selected Tommie as one of the interviewees because she was "recognized as a leader who commands the respect of others," they told her. When the *Times* reporter asked about the turning point in her career that set her on the path to success, she answered with characteristic generosity and humility: "...I feel every day of my life presents turning points for me personally as well as for Walker Research. Perhaps that is why I do not feel that I've found the path to success.... The story behind Walker Research's continuous growth is credited not to a one-woman operation but to many loyal people who have worked with me over the years..."

In December 1963, she chaired the Indianapolis Power and Light Company Women's Club Salute to Women program, sponsored by the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, and served as the dinner speaker. Her talk, titled "It's All So Personal," emphasized the role of women in research services. That year she also chaired the volunteer recruitment program for the Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross, which had a particularly ambitious goal. Charged with adding 1,000 new volunteers to the organization, Tommie put to good use her experience in finding qualified women who wanted to work and successfully met the goal.

It was also the year that Betty Friedan published her book *The Feminine Mystique*, which became a best seller and galvanized the modern women's rights movement. It might have seemed mildly humorous to Tommie Walker, who founded a company less than twenty years after adoption of the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote, that women's rights and the status of women were becoming hot topics now, in the 1960s. From being her dad's tomboy sidekick on the family farm to traveling alone on business before most women would have dared do so, Tommie had never allowed being female to stand in her way.

Furthermore, she had employed women and championed the cause of work-life balance long before the concept found a name and momentum. Indeed, she often told people, "I will always maintain that I'm a homemaker first and a business woman second." Even so, she was a leader in her industry – one in which other strong women owned their own firms. And hers was not the only company to have a mother-son management team.

Tommie's gender often had been an asset in her work, it seemed, although she didn't dwell on the idea and rarely thought of herself as the industry pioneer she in fact was. She was a pioneer in the community, too. She became the first female chairman of the official board for her church, Broadway United Methodist, and the first and only woman at the time to serve on the board of directors of the Indiana Traffic Safety Council.

Women a generation behind her looked to her as a role model. Sallie Rowland, who owned a widely admired, Indianapolis-based architectural and design firm, said of Tommie, "She was a gutsy lady; I admire her for what she did as a woman in business a full generation ahead of me – not many women did that then, certainly not successfully. It's quite something that in her field she achieved acceptance, that she took on the responsibility of building a company."

The whole topic seemed to amuse Tommie. Years later, Nancy Hunt, a Walker employee and friend, conducted comprehensive interviews in which the two women discussed, among a host of subjects, the concept of Tommie being a pioneer as a woman. Said the ever humble entrepreneur, "My being first was a matter of timing – not me."

"But it took you to be able to do it," Nancy insisted. Retorted Tommie, "I didn't know any better."

The truth was, of course, that Tommie Walker knew a great deal. In 1964, she and Frank, having proven the viability of their partnership and gained more confidence in that of the company, contacted their lawyer and accountant about long-range planning. Year-end accounting showed that Walker Research had recorded 1963 billings of $241,327, two and a half times that of 1960, and conducted 342 interviewing assignments for more than 100 companies.

By now the company was outgrowing the buildings on East Forty-Sixth Street, so its executive and financial offices were moved to a nearby office park. But that was only a temporary measure. Soon, there was a groundbreaking for a new headquarters building at 2809 East Fifty-Sixth Street. Smartly dressed in heels, gloves and a wide-brimmed hat, a corsage pinned on the coat she wore over a classic dress, Tommie turned a shovelful of soil for the ceremony.

Just two weeks before 1964 ended, Walker Research Services changed from a partnership to an S Corporation and altered its named to Walker Research, Inc. The changes were largely related to tax and legal considerations, but they also indicated yet another milestone for Tommie. As she approached New

Year's Eve that year, her traditional date for reflecting and planning, she was clearly thinking about the changes that were shaping her twenty-five-year-old company.

On New Year's Day 1965, she recorded her resolutions for the year ahead, and none of them related to Walker Research. Rather, their scope and their emphasis on others illustrated her values and her quiet faith: "1. Improve my posture. 2. Loose (sic) weight and 'hold it.' 3. Drink, talk and eat less. 4. Develop some new 'hobbies' in preparation of days, years ahead (a) Specifically start bridge lessons (b) Read more (c) Travel to new places. 5. Work harder at keeping a sense of humor. 6. Work harder at understanding others: (a) find time to do more for others (b) take time to listen to others point of view as well as to their problems. 7. Remember – taking time daily to say 'God is my strength and power and he alone maketh my way perfect' – may I always remember this as well as Love – above all other things, is giving of one's self to others – lovingly and willingly and endlessly."

She made good immediately on one of her resolutions, earning a certificate from the Blackwood Bridge Center, certifying she had completed their course in contract bridge in March. The travel to new places would come soon, too, but first, there was work to do.

In the fall of 1965, the company moved into its new 6,000-square-foot facility housing the test kitchens and offices. Here, the company would have its first computer system and long-distance phone lines to conduct surveys in several cities at one time, vastly improving efficiency. The new technology was important, but in remembering that year, it was the kitchen and office areas that Tommie focused on. She told an interviewer, "We moved some of our original St. Charles kitchen cabinets there. They were so beautiful...once it caught on, we had it scheduled most all the time and that was a big thing."

The second floor was the business office. On the first floor was a testing area with a built-in movie screen, one-way mirrors, and a nursery with a babysitter. After all, the company needed people to participate in most of the tests and studies clients required, and often the participants were women with

The frame farmhouse in Tipton County, Indiana, where Tommie was born in 1908 still stands. In 1904, when this photo was taken, the Cole household included (from left) a hired hand, name unknown; the live-in housekeeper, Pearl Self, who came from a nearby farm; Ruth and Mid (with their toy baby carriages); Bertha and, on her lap, Hull; and Wes.

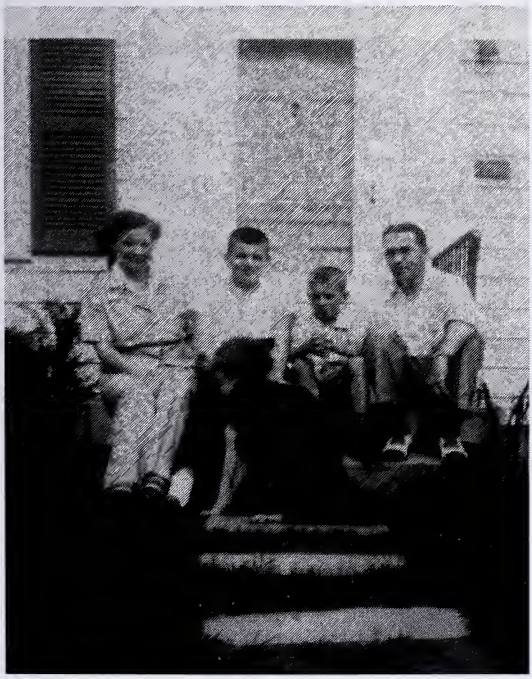
Horses provided the power for both farming and transportation on the Wes Cole farm. This 1904 photo posed Pearl Self, the Cole family's live-in housekeeper, with Bertha Cole and the Cole children (seated in the carriage) in front of the homestead's barn.

The Cole family, always close, supported one another through a number of heartaches and worries in the 1920s following their move from Tipton County to Indianapolis. About half-way through the decade, (from left) Wes, Ruth, Mid, Hull, Tommie, and Bertha posed for a photograph, arms symbolically linked in solidarity.

On a winter day, Wes and Bertha's children – (from left) Hull, Ruth, Mid, and Tommie – bundled up in their best hats and coats for a photo on the lawn of the family home on New Jersey Street in Indianapolis.

Tommie's Shortridge High School yearbook photo from her senior year in 1926 depicts a stylish young woman with a faint but endearing smile. Her careful attention to her hair, clothing, and overall appearance would win her countless compliments in the decades to come.

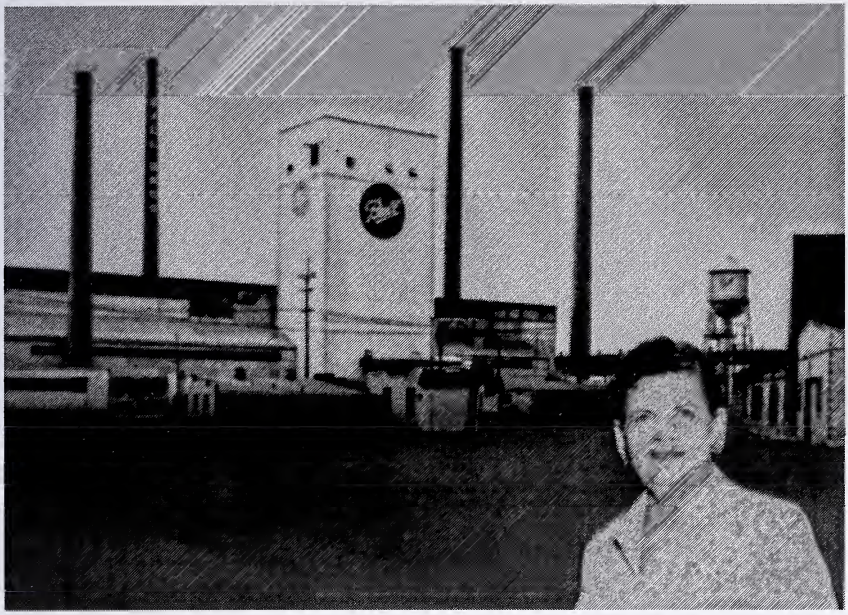
Frank Dilling Walker lived just a few blocks from Tommie when the two were in their late teens. His outgoing personality was a good match for Tommie's warm and engaging one: the two fell in love and married not long after she graduated high school.



Tommie still thought of her work as a profitable hobby when she posed with Frank Sr. and sons Tom and Frank Jr. outside their home about 1940. Family came first, she always maintained. Years later, she would recall that Toby, the family pet, slept next to her desk in the basement office of the house.

A devoted mother, Tommie was just 30 when she and her sons, Tom and Frank Jr., gathered for a formal portrait in 1938.

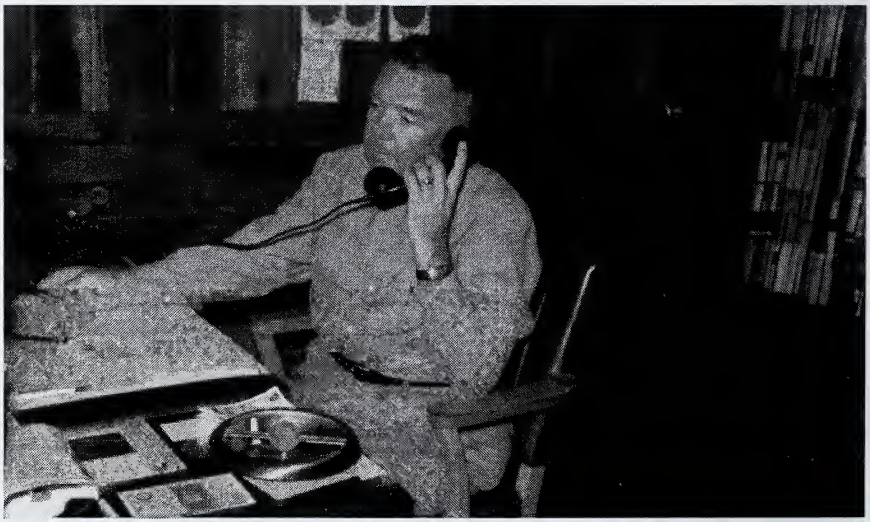
By the early 1940s, Frank Sr. and Tommie had moved into their "dream house" on Compton Street in Indianapolis, and Tommie's attire reflected her growing professionalism. Her work often required her to conduct door-to-door interviews and would soon take her across the country by train.



In 1956, Tommie appeared in a sales brochure for Ball Brothers Company after completing a study on canning jar lids for the Muncie, Indiana-based corporation.

Major surgery couldn't dampen Tommie's sense of humor or stop her from working. While she recovered from a hysterectomy, she continued to run the Ad Club in Indianapolis from her bed at home.

Lauded for his community service, Frank Sr. (second from left) was active in the Broad Ripple High School Fathers Club. Here, officers shared a buoyant moment in the early 1950s.



A successful entrepreneur, Frank Sr.'s brother Charles L. Walker became Tommie's business advisor and confidante following Frank's untimely death. "Uncle Charlie" proved an invaluable supporter to Tommie as she built her company.

A naturally gifted speaker and fond of children, Tommie took genuine pleasure in meeting with "her girls" – a Camp Fire Girls troop at the Indiana State Girls School. She was newly widowed but set aside her grief in this lively 1952 gathering.

A doting grandmother, Tommie joyfully greeted the birth of each of her grandchildren and took them to the office with her on several occasions. Neither she nor her grandson, Steve Walker, could have known when they "played office" together that he would one day head the company she founded.

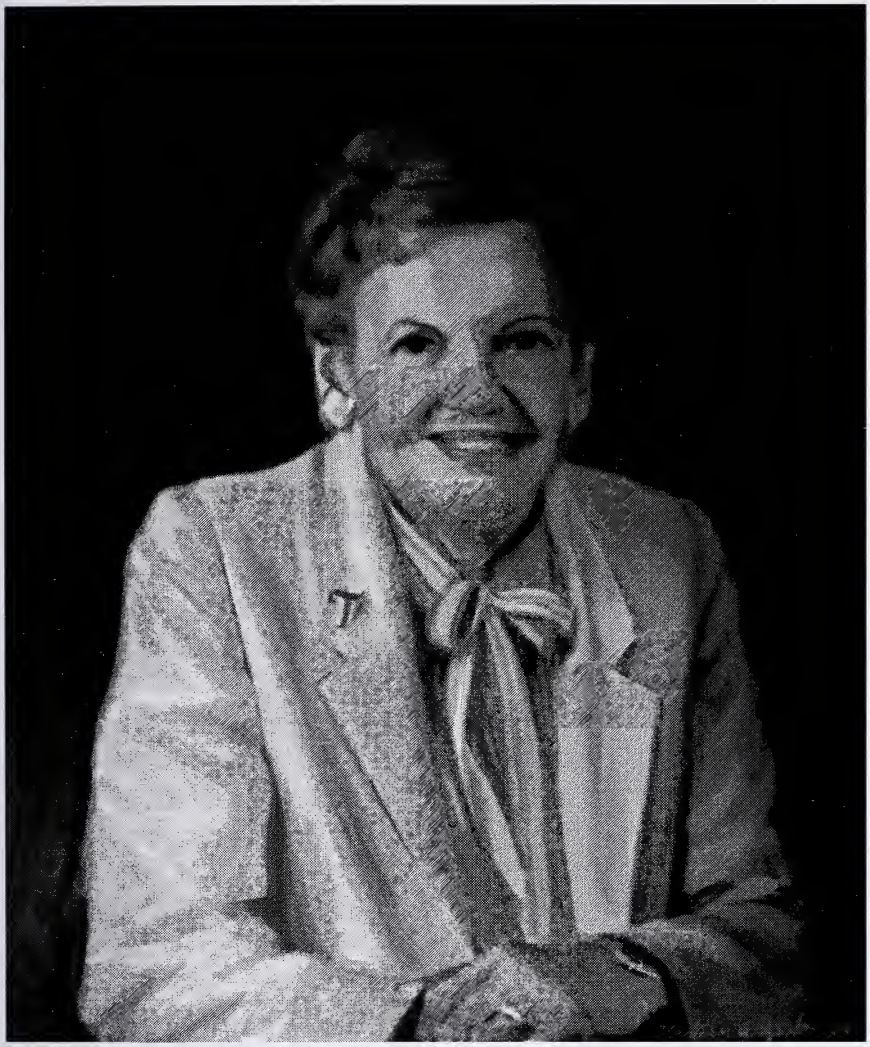
Indianapolis Zoo director Earl Wood gathered with Tommie's grandchildren in 1967 to greet a chimpanzee named Babs that Tommie had donated to the zoo, one of her countless philanthropic gestures. Walker grandchildren, clockwise from lower left: Leah, Mike, Dave, Karen, Linda, Steve.

In what would prove to be a brilliant stroke of innovation, Tommie created this independent consumer test kitchen where her employees worked with volunteers to test hundreds of products. She welcomed others in the market research field to visit, and soon they were copying her concepts.

After being widowed for nearly 20 years, Tommie met and married Phillip "Andy" Anderson, a warmhearted and congenial man who shared her love of entertaining friends and family.

For her many accomplishments, down-to-earth personality, boundless generosity, and sparkling wit, Tommie Walker stood out in any crowd. In this one, and in fact in countless others of business leaders, she also stood out due to her gender. Her name on paper might have fooled them, yet Tommie wasn't trying to fool anybody – her femininity was evident but soon took a back-seat to her obvious professional capabilities.

Three generations of Walkers – (from left) Frank Jr., his son Steve, and Tommie – shared responsibilities at Walker Research before Tommie completely retired. Each in turn guided and grew it over the course of more than seven decades.



Tommie Walker's principals and spirit live on at Walker, where her portrait holds a prominent place in the headquarters office in Indianapolis.

children. Tommie had established a method for recruiting not only women but also men and children, and an impressive list of organizations – parent-teacher organizations, Newcomers Clubs, church groups, Scout troops – that provided a steady stream of testers to participate in myriad assignments.

On January 9, 1966, the new building was ready for visitors. Tommie and Frank jointly signed an invitation to employees and their families to a Sunday afternoon open house when guests could tour the space. Separate special events brought clients, community leaders, and others to the facility for an inside look. Before the term stakeholder became ubiquitous and executives made a study of how to reach them, Tommie naturally identified and welcomed the various groups that were so important to her and her company.

Keeping the new facilities fully scheduled was crucial to its profitability, and Tommie's continued speech-giving surely helped in achieving that goal. She spoke at the seventeenth annual convention of the New Jersey Milk Industry in Atlantic City, where she described market research as the "newest of sciences and the oldest of arts," the phrase she had come to love. She told her audience she had conducted "a little market research study" of Indiana and New Jersey milk-purchasing in preparation for her talk and then went on to entertain them with the impressive details of her findings.

She regaled another group with a speech titled "Who Cares," in which she "shed a good deal of light on the way many major corporations decide the best method to bring products to our attention," according to the follow-up coverage. Attendees at an annual meeting of the Indiana Home Economics Association in Richmond were told their guest speaker was president of Walker Research, Inc., which "serves clients all over the United States and Canada..."

Award ceremonies also appeared on her calendar, including the one that reunited her with her childhood friend John J. Burkhart, now chairman of the board of College/University Corporation (commonly known as College Life Insurance Company) and a leader in civic affairs. Both received honors from the Indianapolis Chapter of the Society for the Advancement of

Management, which presented its annual management awards in recognition of "significant contributions in practicing and advancing the art and science of management." Their fellow honorees were Indianapolis Police Chief Winston L. Churchill and Dr. Maynard K. Hine, chancellor of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

It had been a long time since young Tommie rode to school with John Burkhart in a horse-drawn wagon. Just how far she had advanced since then became abundantly obvious to her in 1966, when she took her first trip to Europe, a destination unthinkable to that schoolgirl in the horse-drawn wagon. The trip was more than simply the fulfillment of one of her New Year's resolutions; it was also an international business trip. She joined a group of women on a tour of the Greek Islands but included in her itinerary a visit with Minos Research, combining work with pleasure.

Back home, she purchased a half interest in a cottage on Indiana's Lake Wawasee with her son Tom and his wife, Dottie. Popular with residents of Chicago and Indianapolis as a summer vacation area, Lake Wawasee was known for attracting affluent, sometimes high profile people. Al Capone, the infamous Chicago gangster, was reputed to have stayed at the luxury hotel there, and Eli Lilly, founder of the pharmaceutical company, maintained a residence on the lake. Charlie Walker, enabled by his successful dry-cleaning business, had purchased a place on Lake Wawasee in 1943. Soon after that, whenever Tommie and Frank vacationed with the Gaddis family at the much smaller and more modest Lake Webster just a few miles away, they would go visit "rich Uncle Charlie" there.

In short, Lake Wawasee had a certain cache. Being able to afford the house there surely gave Tommie a sense of having arrived. While she never struck her friends as competitive or ostentatious, this particular purchase had a slight "I'll show them!" quality for Tommie. The farmer's daughter from Tipton County who had not been able to go to college and had struggled to pay the bills as a young wife and mother had "made it" through her own efforts and intelligence, and now she, too, could vacation on Lake Wawasee. The cottage was certainly practical: In the years ahead, it would become the site of

countless Walker family gatherings, visits from friends, and retreats from the hectic pace in Indianapolis. Equally important, it was symbolic to Tommie of the success and financial security she had achieved.

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So much had changed for Tommie since her first year as a market researcher, when she conducted four studies and billed $500. In 1966, Walker Research tripled its 1963 billings, to more than $700,000. Recounting the year's accomplishments during an interview in 1967, Tommie estimated that more than 50,000 women had participated in tests, with payment going to their organizations, not to them personally, she emphasized. The reporter added that "reimbursement [ranged] from $1 per member participating upwards, depending on the complexity of the test. The organizations last year earned $65,000."

Commenting on the products her company tested, Tommie said with uncanny accuracy that she foresaw even more gourmet foods available to consumers of the future, with an increasing variety of frozen salads and more direct freezer-to-table foods. And she didn't miss an opportunity to acknowledge the women who tested products, saying, "They are too family oriented. Ask a woman what she thinks about a product and she'll start, 'My husband says…' or 'My children didn't like…' When we explain that it is her personal opinion we want, it sometimes comes as something of a shock. Then, she blossoms…"

Knowledge, experience, and instinct had given Tommie an exceptional discernment. It was what made her perfectly suited to her profession. It was also what made her adept at determining when it was time to make adjustments in her life. Ever since Frank Jr. had returned from military service, and even before that, she had been preparing him, her company, and herself for a transition. A promising young man named Jim Sammer had joined the company in 1965 as an account executive and, having proven his capabilities, was now ready for more responsibility. Tommie believed the time for change had come.

In 1967, Frank was named president of Walker Research; Jim Sammer became vice president and secretary. Tommie moved into the chairman role, a position that allowed her to disengage from some of the daily operations for the first time. "I think this transition in leadership just evolved over time," Frank later recalled. "The business was changing. More of the business and revenue were from clients that I had identified and built. We were developing new methods to conduct and analyze our research. It wasn't the same kind of business that she had started almost thirty years earlier."

Some people would have been bitter, resentful, angry, or frightened by those changes, but Tommie the pragmatist, Tommie the community leader, and Tommie the family-first homemaker didn't seem to experience any of those emotions. Like the women in her studies who suddenly realized it was their own opinion, not those of her husband and children, that was valued, Tommie blossomed.

Tommie's 1965 New Year's resolutions might not have been her only road map, but they did play a role in how she chose to conduct her life. "Find time to do more for others?" In the summer of 1967, a photo in an Indianapolis newspaper showed all of her grandchildren surrounding Indianapolis Zoo director Earl Wood, who was holding a chimpanzee named Babs. Tommie had donated the chimp.

"Travel to new places?" "Work harder at understanding others?" She took those seriously, too. In the March 1968 edition of *Inner-Views*, the Walker Research employee publication, Tommie wrote about her "South American Adventure," which she described as her first winter vacation. In two weeks she visited four Latin American countries, and in her article she recounted her journey with candor, humor, and typical insightfulness.

She traveled with 150 people to Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, taking in Indian markets and reservations, ranches and estates with beautiful gardens, and magnificent views from hotel balconies and Sugarloaf Mountain. In

Buenos Aires, the highlight for her was time spent with Harry Muller of the Harry Muller Public Relations and Market Research firm; in Santiago, it was attending a church service where she ran into people from Indiana, including one who had been a Walker respondent; in Brazil, she was impressed with the diversity of people in Rio De Janeiro and her 122-step climb to the statue of Christ. Despite the fact that "many of us had developed acute cases of Montezuma Revenge," Tommie soaked up the experience with the same enthusiasm she exhibited back at the office.

She ended her report to employees with this paragraph: "In conclusion, I am happy to have been a member of 'The South America Adventure' as a change or vacation helps me to take time to re-evaluate my personal way of life as well as that of my country. So here I am back, with a deep feeling of gratitude for my family, my community, for these United States and lastly, but not the least, grateful for the privilege of being a member of a great team – THE WALKER RESEARCH GANG!"

When 1968 was finished and the numbers were tallied, Tommie and Frank could celebrate two important milestones: The company had opened its first branch office, in St. Louis, to facilitate its shopping center-based research there. And for the first time, annual billings topped the $1 million mark. The client list contained more impressive, household names, too. Their teamwork was reaping rewards, both financial and emotional, for the two Walkers.

Outside the office, Tommie had given more speeches and provided more community service. She chaired the business and industry segment of the Christmas Seals Campaign, served on the Girl Scout Council and the Mental Health Association board, and contributed her time to the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.

She remained heavily involved with the Red Cross, as well. During World War II, her volunteer efforts had focused on stateside assistance to members of the military, an important task to be sure. But nothing she had done to date would quite prepare her for September 9, 1969.

At 4:15 that afternoon she received a call from the chairwoman of the Red Cross Service Groups, who asked Tommie to be at the chapter house within thirty minutes. The reason was hard to comprehend: A commercial airliner, operated by Allegheny Airlines as flight 853 on its way from Cincinnati to Indianapolis, had collided midair over Fairland, Indiana, with a small private plane, leased to a student pilot making a solo cross-country flight. All seventy-eight passengers and four crew members on board the DC-10 and the pilot of the Piper PA-28 perished, and both planes were destroyed by the collision and ground impact.

Along with others assigned to the canteen service group, Tommie was needed to help feed the hundreds of workers at the scene. It was what Tommie described as "my greatest 'emotional' volunteer experience, also [the] most terrifying…" She told a reporter for the *Indianapolis News*, "I was stunned and shocked, and we all walked around in a daze at the horror we were forced to see. But there was a human side, too."

Tommie and her fellow volunteers worked well into the night, operating the Red Cross mobile kitchen. Area residents arrived at the scene, offering parcels of food, responding in the only way they could think of to the disaster. It was a night Tommie never forgot.

If she made any resolutions that New Year's Eve, as the 1960s ended, she left no record of them. Perhaps she was still using those she made five years earlier; certainly she had been finding time to do more for others. And whether guided by her resolution to "develop some new 'hobbies' in preparation of days, years ahead" or simply by her broad intellectual curiosity, she began the new decade by completing a twelve-week course on ancient Judeo-Christian literature at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Ever since she and Frank Sr. had sold their house on Compton in 1950, Tommie had been an apartment dweller, moving every few years, and in true Tommie fashion, she made friends in every residential complex. In 1970, she

was living on the northeast side of Indianapolis, in Chateau de Ville, where she kept a putter and golf balls for her grandchildren to use on the development's putting green when they visited her. She had a lively social circle there, and over the course of the year, someone in the group introduced Tommie to a widower named Phillip Anderson. Everyone called him Andy.

Tommie, now sixty-two and widowed for more than eighteen years, had met and gone out occasionally with other eligible men; one long-time friend frequently served as her social escort. But Andy was different. "I think he just swept her off her feet," her son Frank said. Andy grew up on a farm near Brazil, Indiana, giving him an instant connection with the Tipton County farmer's daughter. He was a former Purdue University football player who earned his master's degree at the University of Illinois and taught school before joining Allison Aircraft Division of General Motors. For ten years Andy lived abroad (his territory included Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and India) and interfaced with airlines and governments.

Andy and Tommie had other things in common. Each had two children and each had an outgoing, winning personality. They soon began seeing one another regularly.

Tomnie's niece Billilou once observed, "Tommie was a forward-looking person; she could move with the decades and be a part of the times." As 1971 began, Tommie definitely had her eye on the future. The year kicked off with an *Indianapolis News* article titled "Women Leaders Look Ahead to '71" on January 2, in which she predicted, with noteworthy accuracy, "1971 will see companies responding to changes in public attitudes with regard to social change and ecological concern... More production will be aimed directly at ecological problems.

"We will see many products now seen as problems (detergents in phosphates) reformulated and retested. Appliances and other products that do not pollute will be developed. The consumer can be prepared to pay for these new and revised products, for ultimately this expense must be passed on to the end user."

She participated in a legislative showcase that helped inform visitors about critical mental health, social, and welfare legislation pending before the 1971 Indiana General Assembly, convening early in the year. And she reserved the date on her calendar when a letter arrived February 17 notifying her, "For significant contribution to commerce, the members of the Indianapolis Chapter of the Society for Advancement of Management would like to present you a management award plaque at their March meeting."

The letter did not include an important point: Tommie would be the first woman to receive the award. The nonprofit organization, whose members were middle- and upper-management personnel, provided a list of those previously honored. Among them were Indianapolis Mayor Richard Lugar and Tony Hulman, president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. But not a single female name appeared on the roster. The presentation was to be held Wednesday, March 10, at the Airport Hilton Inn.

It was the last time she stepped to a podium as Tommie Walker. On March 27, 1971, Tommie Walker married Andy and took his last name as her own. It would be an adjustment for the women at the office, who had thrown a bridal shower for her and given her a negligee for the wedding night, to think of her as Tommie Anderson.

Dr. Bob Pierce, her long-time minister and advisor, officiated at the Broadway United Methodist Church ceremony. Afterward there was a reception for family and close friends at Frank and Bev's home. It was a joyous occasion for those close to Tommie, who were delighted that she had fallen in love again.

When they married, Tommie and Andy bought a house in the northern Indianapolis suburb of Carmel and decorated it with oil paintings he had brought back from Germany and Holland. As she provided a tour to a reporter, Tommie said of her new husband, "Andy loves working with the land, and since he retired from Allison Division of General Motors... he can't keep away from plowing and working his farms." Then she added, with characteristic humor, "Andy courted me with vegetables from his garden."

The businesswoman who described herself as first a homemaker and who always put family at the top of her priority list was beginning a new chapter once again, with innate enthusiasm. In a letter she reported, "I am a mother and grandmother and now once again a full-time housewife. I love to plan family parties around my family's many interests. In the past three years I have traveled to Europe, the Greek Islands, South and Central America, the Orient, and from coast to coast here in the United States. My third 'hobby' (family first, travel second) is cooking ... I have two styles – Country Style (like I was taught as a child, when I grew up on a farm, the youngest of a large family) and my 'new style' with a gourmet flair."

It seemed that Tommie had been married to Walker Research for much of her adulthood. Now that she had a real husband again and her son was effectively running the company, Tommie had both the desire and the opportunity to step back. Her relinquishing control of the company was a gradual thing. Increased automation and fewer clients whom she herself had won and served meant the work place was less familiar and less comfortable for her. She remained on the board of directors, but it was soon apparent to employees that Tommie was no longer active on a day-to-day basis.

"The employees were proud of her and happy for her," Frank later assessed. "I think they thought she had earned it – that she had worked hard and it was time for her to relax and enjoy. She would say that in the big picture, 'We need more Indians than chiefs – I learned lots as an Indian, I have been a chief and now it is time to be an Indian again.'"

In reality not yet old, but clearly feeling she was no longer young, Tommie summed it up this way: "The old guard has to let go and let the young men and women take part."

Chapter Four

Collecting People, With Family First

The early 1970s brought dramatic changes for Tommie, no stranger to abrupt shifts and surprises. A businesswoman ahead of her time, a bride before she was old enough to vote, and a grandmother at age forty-five, she was now a newlywed in her sixties. After spending nearly two decades discovering new neighborhoods and making new friends in various apartment communities, she owned a house in the suburbs and was about to purchase a second home in Florida. Three decades of running a company gave way to running a household.

In her enthusiasm for this exciting new phase, Tommie initially decided to resign from many of her voluntary and community leadership roles in order to focus on Andy and their life together. They began spending more time at their Siesta Key, Florida, property, prompting Tommie to quip, "When couples go to Florida and spend the entire winter season there – they are retired!" She laughed at herself for having once grown impatient with the older drivers there, only to realize she was becoming one of them.

At Walker Research, Tommie did not have to be present in body to be present in spirit. The "your opinion counts" concept she formulated twenty years earlier and discussed in many speeches had developed into a full-blown campaign. The telephone interview, Tommie's initiation into that industry,

was now becoming a popular survey tool, facilitated by new technology. Walker Research pioneered its use, employing dozens of interviewers who, like Tommie, excelled at drawing people out in a conversation. In the company parking lot, Frank built telephone booths from plywood and shag carpeting with help from his son, Steve, now a high school student who was already thinking of a career with his grandmother's firm.

These innovations, along with the marketing and operational steps taken by Frank and the management team, propelled sales, and in 1973 corporate billings topped the $2 million mark. It was another milestone, one Tommie never anticipated when she worked late into the evening at the second-hand desk in the family's basement on Compton Street. Yet, as one employee observed, "She was a brilliant woman and had great imagination about what the company could become and how to make it grow."

Ed Marcum, who was a senior manager with the public accounting firm that audited Walker's books and also handled private financial matters for Walker executives, understood how much Tommie had done to establish a viable company. He believed, "Tommie naturally had the entrepreneurial talent they now try to teach people. She had a spirit of wanting to build something and had no outward sign of a fear of failure. The demands of making payroll and having responsibility for the livelihoods of other people get a lot of people down, but Tommie had optimism about her ability to succeed. She was the consummate entrepreneur."

She was also the picture of honesty, he added. "Tommie consistently exhibited a very high moral character. In meetings, her question was always, 'What's the right thing to do?'" Tommie lived that same value system at work, and it was clear to employees. One recounted that Tommie was always extremely ethical and "you just knew it." The company had high ethical standards and "if someone didn't buy in, they weren't a Walker kind of person... It started with Tommie."

For more than three decades, she'd built the foundation for these high-growth years and set the standards by which they could be achieved. Now, however, the company founder began leaving most of the business decisions to Frank

and instead, turned her attention more and more to things that interested and fulfilled her. Family was at the top of the list. Tommie relished being a grandmother and had developed relationships with all her grandchildren, starting with the birth of her first grandson, David, in 1953.

"When we were living in South Bend and after we had our baby, Tommie would come to visit us," her daughter-in-law Dottie recalled. "She would call and say she'd bring dinner – and she did! A whole suitcase filled with noodles, green beans, and a canned chicken. Dessert, too!" From the beginning, food was part of the family connection. As David and the other grandchildren grew older, Tommie loved cooking for them and would make treats they especially enjoyed. One of those was Vienna sausages wrapped in dough, commonly called pigs in blankets – she assembled and baked them, and then joined in devouring them with pleasure. Another grandchild once marveled, "She loved hot dogs as much as tenderloin."

In the years that Tom's work required him and his family to move to various cities, Tommie alternated between her two sons' homes for Christmas and arranged other visits. After Tom's job brought the family back to Indianapolis in the 1960s, everyone lived in the same city, and she found countless opportunities to interact with them.

When Frank and Bev vacationed out of town, she moved in to watch their children, Steve and Leah. Steve remembered those occasions vividly. "She'd come to the house with her purse, briefcase and a bag of groceries, kick off her shoes and tell us to turn off the TV," he laughed. She liked to get everyone organized for the next day and wasn't "into drama – she was bossy in a good-natured way," he said. "It was always fun to be around her."

Her patience was both a gift and a wonder to Leah, who at age thirteen was confounded by the need to find a long dress for a formal banquet she was to attend. It was an awards program for her horseback riding achievements, and with her mother away, Leah turned to Tommie for help. "We probably went to a dozen stores," Leah recalled later, "and she never seemed to tire of the search. She just gave herself fully and patiently to me."

A little later, when Frank and Bev were going through difficult times in their marriage, Tommie sat up late into the night with her daughter-in-law, talking through the issues that eventually would lead to divorce. Sallie Rowland, the architectural firm owner, recalled, "I helped Frank set up his new apartment after his separation, and during that time, I often saw Tommie more as Frank's mother and Steve and Leah's grandmother; she wasn't ringing her hands, but she was certainly concerned. I could tell it preoccupied her sometimes, and it seemed to take its toll in some ways."

Seeing anyone she cared about suffering affected Tommie, perhaps more so when the women in her circle were involved. She had witnessed the effects of abandonment and divorce on her sister Ruth and, later, empathized with the loneliness and financial struggles of widowhood for her mother (Tommie knew those twin demons herself, following Frank Sr.'s death). Among her employees were women whose husbands had left them, and given her close relationships with her staff, she was acquainted with their worries. Having hired more than one female employee who was in the midst of a divorce and in need of a job, perhaps for the first time, Tommie was especially sympathetic to those going through the ordeal.

Such sensitivities made her adept at creating memorable experiences for her family. While in elementary school, Tom's daughter Karen would accompany her grandmother to the office on Fifty-Sixth Street, where she first saw equipment such as a collator and got to do a little stapling and other "work" appropriate for a ten-year-old. It was what another of Tommie's grandchildren called "playing office in her office," while Tommie worked. Karen recalled she was even permitted one of the sixteen-ounce soft drinks Tommie stocked for her employees in the break room, where there was always a full cookie jar, as well.

As a young teen, Karen got a new assignment from her grandmother: Tommie would set up a table with one chair for Karen at Tommie's home and ask Karen to wrap, "with crisp creases in the paper," various "gifts of love and remembrance." This practice taught Karen about generosity, she said, a character trait Tommie possessed in abundance.

It was typical of Tommie to assign a task to each grandchild – and indeed, often to each adult – who came to her house for a meal or a visit. It was her way of making everyone feel important and valued, and when they worked together, of forming a bond. Breaking green beans (to be cooked with ham or bacon as a Tommie dinner staple), setting out the plates and cutlery, filling water glasses – each task entrusted felt like Tommie's vote of confidence. And when everyone was gathered around the table, one family member observed, Tommie was careful to address questions to each person there, skillfully drawing everyone into the conversation.

Her grandson David, whose "assignments" included serving as a security guard escorting female Walker Research employees to their cars when they worked into the evening, recalled, "She was a very good cook and often hosted holiday meals. She would say, 'If dinner isn't ready on time, it's okay – they'll enjoy it more later.' And it was not a fast meal, because people often sat and talked a long time."

In a year no one could remember, Tommie initiated what became a cherished tradition: the White Elephant party. Members of the extended family gathered each year the day after Christmas, and everyone was required to bring a gag gift for swapping. There were general gifts and gifts with named recipients, and in the end everyone in attendance had the same number to unwrap, true to Tommie's sense of fairness. Tommie especially liked getting someone else's hand-me-down, and some items reappeared year after year. Anyone who received a piece of clothing or a wig had to model it for the group, and there were big trash bins for items no one wanted.

Although the menu might include shrimp and beef tenderloin, the gatherings were "nothing fancy," Wendy and Dave Walker concurred. Sometimes Tommie secured entertainment, but sometimes people just sang silly songs, and there was lots of cheer. The menu evolved over the years, and the timing of the party would shift, but the sheer joy and congeniality never changed. When people married into the family, they were warmly welcomed and at their first White Elephant party always had a few eye-opening and unforgettable experiences.

"My grandmother broadened my world," Karen said, echoing the thoughts of her cousins and siblings. "She went out of her way to make us feel very loved."

In 1974, Tommie received the highest honor given by the local chapter of the American Red Cross. The Rose Sussman Award included a diamond pin, presented annually in memory of a woman who had been a Red Cross volunteer for more than forty years. Tommie topped that: her citation honored her for forty-six years of service. Now a lifetime member of its board, she had filled several committee and leadership roles.

She'd begun her Red Cross work when Walker Research was still a start-up, and now, in 1974, it was thirty-five years old and increasingly well known in the market research industry. The company initiated its Industry Image Study, which tracked consumer attitudes toward research, and made the results available to the industry at large at no cost. It was just the kind of generous gesture that Tommie's values, inherited from her mother and instilled in both the company and her sons, inspired.

Well out of daily business decisions, Tommie was only marginally involved with the company's headquarters relocation in 1975 to the far north side of Indianapolis. The Fifty-Sixth Street facility remained as a regional branch, one of seven offices around the country that employed more than 700 people by 1976. In an interview that year, she told a newspaper writer, "I don't feel left out because I'm retired. I'm able to spend more time with things that bring me in contact with people – so I'm back again where I started."

In their neighborhood filled with young families, Tommie and Andy had become the "neighborhood grandparents. Children find daily ping pong matches fun and the couple's cookie jar always full," the article said. Behind that snapshot was a larger picture. A private joke between the Andersons and Frank Walker was the theory that one couple sent their children over to visit when Tommie and Andy were enjoying their cocktails so the weary parents could enjoy their own cocktail hour.

Tommie seemed to be thoughtful about the whole retirement topic. She told the newspaper reporter, "To me, people who retire often seem lost. If they don't have good health when they reach retirement, something else is gone, too, and the world gets pretty small. Having an interest in others is important." She confided that she was even writing a book, tentatively titled *Some Do, Some Don't*, on enjoying retirement, and then qualified her efforts in a typically self-effacing manner: 'But I'm not a journalist." Apparently, she decided she wasn't an author, either: The book was never completed.

But Tommie was not at a loss for how to fill her days. While she had remained on the Red Cross board and in a few other philanthropic groups all along, she privately questioned her earlier decision to minimize involvement in civic life when she remarried. Now she began to engage more again in social, volunteer, and professional activities. She joined the Civic Theatre Masquers, a women's organization, and chaired their newsletter, the membership committee, and eventually the board itself. She was also active with the Little Red Door, an organization that aids cancer patients, and a participant in the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce senior retired executives group. "I still say every day can be an exciting day and a busy day," she said about retirement. "It may not be filled with things that are ho, ho, ho, but a very busy day."

In 1976, she attended her Shortridge High School fiftieth class reunion and penned a guest column for a local newspaper, appropriately titled "Your Opinion Counts." Keeping up on the industry she pioneered, she did her homework for the article, in which she detailed why Central Indiana was considered an excellent test market. "We have all four seasons..., excellent access for retail trade, good roads, and an international airport," she enumerated. "We are surrounded by the best and most productive farm land, making our community broad in miles, and attracting hundreds of families who come here to shop, for entertainment, and for community involvement."

Just as she broadened her grandchildren's worlds, she also broadened her own in retirement. Eventually Tommie visited five of the seven continents and traveled with Andy to several countries that, as a young girl, she never dared to dream of seeing in person. They continued to spend time in Florida, where they opened their condo to guests and made new friends.

Known for looking forward, not back, Tommie took an active interest in what was happening in the world and in new ideas. One concept gaining traction was that of finding economically viable ways to provide renewable energy. When Indiana Governor Otis Bowen established a committee on solar energy, she accepted an invitation to join.

On a spring day in 1976, Bill Corbin rang the Andersons' doorbell. He was the creator of Unified Neighbors, a consumer information service that guided subscribers toward quality local businesses, and was going house to house in Tommie's neighborhood, selling memberships. She, too, had once gone door to door and knew what it felt like to receive an unfriendly greeting or have a door slammed in her face.

"I'm a thirty-two-year-old guy, hawking a new, unproven concept," Bill later wrote of that chance encounter with Tommie. "I am invited, warmly, into her home because (I see now), she sensed that the idea was worth listening to, and the person who knocked was at least on her radar screen of entrepreneurial passion. She was kind, gracious, supportive – and she gave me twelve bucks to join Unified Neighbors. But several thousand people did that.

"Somehow she communicated that she was a kindred spirit... Out of those thousands of people, she was the only one who communicated that kind of engagement with what I was doing." Over the ensuing years, Bill and Tommie talked many times. This opportunity to mentor a person in whom she could see some part of her younger self invigorated her.

"She gave me wonderful counsel about how I could correctly position an idea that didn't even exist before I dreamed it up," Bill said. "Her support was, without question, a meaningful part of my success. More important than the business aspect, her human kindness ranks among my best memories of the ways people can and should treat one another. What I recognize now is the extent to which she was living her own belief system: kindness, compassion, but more importantly encouragement to achieve the best that my idea and I could accomplish."

On May 22, 1978, Tommie celebrated her seventieth birthday. When Walker Research closed the books that spring on the 1977 fiscal year, it recorded sales of $5 million, more than doubling billings in just four years. And 1978 would be even better, with revenue exceeding $7 million.

The *Indianapolis Star* newspaper, featuring Tommie in an article titled "Running Business Needs More Than Magic," reported that Walker Research was now "one of the 20 largest [businesses] in the market research field." Tommie had been on a panel of "successful women business owners who will share some of their experiences on how they got into business, including their successes and obstacles." But when she told the reporter about her tips on how to succeed, they didn't deal with sales goals or marketing strategies; they focused on far more personal things.

"Her suggestions for success include asking yourself if you wake up with enthusiasm to get to work, keeping a healthy body and mind to meet challenges, writing down personal goals often and reading them back," the article said. "Most of all, though, LISTEN! Flattery is good for all of us, if you don't inhale it."

Soon after that interview, Tommie's older sister Mid died peacefully in her sleep after years of declining health. Her death deeply affected Tommie: the two had been so close and shared so many memories. Their attachment was evident to everyone. "Aunt Mid and Tommie were known as the Tipton 2 of the Tipton girls," Lynn Walker Young recalled. "They were a hoot together. They loved to sing and dance. It was fun to watch."

At the company's annual meeting in May 1979, Frank and the employees surprised Tommie with a silver framed Founder's Award plaque. Five years later in a speech she would say of that event, "Truthfully, this was a surprise and one that years later touches me deeply." Even though Tommie had now been only occasionally involved with the company for several years, she was far from forgotten.

When she did go to the office, she joked with employee Sylvia Cox Barr, it

was to "sign the checks to pay the rent." But, in fact, her presence had a highly beneficial effect on the entire building. Tommie frequently arranged for some of the older employees to join her at lunch on those days, Sylvia remembered, and always brought a small gift for each of her companions.

Careful not to disrupt the work day, Tommie had a method for keeping conversations with the employees brief. "You must have something better to do," she would say, and most instantly took the hint. Bill Easton, a Walker executive, never forgot his first encounter with the founder: "I was suitably impressed immediately with her warm and professional yet very relaxed approach to the meeting of a company 'newbie.' I was fresh out of college and new to the research game and truly impressed with the opportunity to meet her since I was well aware of her many significant business accomplishments.

"I also found out very quickly that one contributing reason for her successes was her priority for work over un-productive 'small talk,' because after she quickly learned a bit about my wife, kids, likes and recent history, she asked, 'Are you working today?' To which I answered, 'Yes, there are several things that need to get done today.' To which she politely replied, 'So nice to meet you, and please don't let me stand in your way.' I am often a bit slow on the uptake, but I right away caught her meaning."

Susie Collins, who became Frank's executive assistant ("he called me radar," she laughed), recalled Tommie's appearance not just in the office but every time she saw her: almost regal in her bearing, sometimes wearing yellow, her favorite color, always impeccably groomed. "I can't imagine her looking disheveled or not put together," Susie once said, then added, "Yet, she was not a fussy person. I put her on a pedestal. I think everyone looked up to her and had such respect for her."

And it wasn't just at Walker Research that Tommie drew admiration. Her generosity continued to win accolades in the community, as well. In April 1980, she received the Little Red Door Recognition Award for dedicated service in the fight against cancer. Since joining the board of the Marion County cancer agency in 1972, she had chaired ten different committees, served two years

as board secretary, and driven more than 1,600 miles to deliver supplies to cancer patients.

Among Tommie and Andy's circle of Indianapolis friends who called themselves "the fun group," there was universal regard for Tommie. One spoke with awe of her generosity: she was known to help both friends and family members with bills when they were in need; invite guests to stay at her Lake Wawasee house or at the condos she owned in Florida; and create home-cooked meals for them. Another said of Tommie, "She found great joy in doing things that brought people joy and made people happy."

Jim Sammer, Walker's executive who was the first nonfamily member to own shares in the company, agreed that she helped a great many people, often in secret; in fact, he emphasized, "Even Frank and Tom didn't know how many lives she touched." Her selfless nature inspired David Walker's wife, Wendy, to say, "Tommie was very generous and giving. She didn't talk about being a Christian – she just exemplified it."

Tommie was just as generous in her gratitude and friendship. Almost everyone who knew her had received, at some point, a handwritten note from Tommie Walker Anderson, thanking them for a kind word or a gift or a fun evening, congratulating them on receiving mention in a newspaper article or winning an award, complimenting them on a job well done. "She was known for taking time to write personal notes," Sallie Rowland said of Tommie. "She always expressed her appreciation that way; sometimes she would write just to let you know she was thinking of you."

Tommie and Andy loved hosting theme parties and playing bridge or canasta with members of the fun group. And they frequently dined out with friends, including Katy Heuhl, Tommie's friend from the war years when they were Red Cross volunteers together, and Katy's husband, Walter. "It was always fun to be with them," Katy smiled, in recalling those days. "I never heard any criticism of Tommie. Everyone loved her – she was so congenial. She was an outgoing, lovely person, always interested in you and not talking about herself. She was used to letting other people talk in her work and it just followed through in her personal life."

Whether it was decades-long friendships, such as the one she shared with Katy, or ones she forged later in her life, such as the one with her housekeeper Ruby, Tommie had an eclectic group of friends. Jim Sammer observed that she "put people together from different backgrounds." Many who knew her well simply stated that Tommie "collected people."

Her grandson David observed her gift for connecting, individually, with almost everyone she met. "That was one of her great strengths – to connect with people and what was going on with them," he noted with admiration. "She would listen to everything they said and then deliver a few pearls of wisdom." As one long-time acquaintance put it, "Tommie really never knew a stranger. She always would ask people she met about themselves and their family."

Given her welcoming nature, it was not at all surprising that when Frank remarried in August 1979, Tommie wrapped his wife, Jane Tatman Connelly, and her children, Kevin and Kitty, immediately and lovingly into the family. Jane and Tommie established a tradition of shopping together on Jane's birthday: Tommie invited Jane to pick out her own gift, which gave both of them great pleasure. One year, Tommie even purchased the same outfit for herself. Theirs was a warm, close relationship from early on in part because, Jane said, "Tommie was very friendly and made you feel very much at home."

Soon after their marriage, Frank and Jane purchased a condo on Siesta Key, Florida. Tommie, who had long owned a condo in the same area that she liberally loaned to family members and close friends, later followed suite, purchasing one in the same building but on a different floor. The times the four of them spent together were "pure fun," Jane recalled. "She could see that Frank and I were happy and so she was happy." That, too, was characteristic of Tommie. She once told a member of the family that "when the world is right," meaning when her children were happy, "nothing can stop you."

In the early 1980s, there was ample cause for her family to be happy. Walker

Research now had nearly a thousand employees and sales of more than $10 million, and it was ranked the fifteenth-largest research company by Advertising Age magazine.

In 1982, Steve Walker joined the company as a project director, making him the third generation of the family to be actively involved. For many years, Steve had anticipated this step in his career. Tommie never pressed him on the point, but he grew up with a sense of responsibility about it. When he initially chose to major in performing arts at Boston University, he was mindful that his education would one day come in handy when he made business presentations. Soon he changed his major to an even more practical discipline: management. While Steve was in college, Tommie had often invited him over for dinner when he was home on school breaks. There had been a close link all his life with his grandmother and the company she founded: Becoming an employee just seemed natural.

The accountant Ed Marcum later pointed out, "Family-owned companies often don't get to the third generation. For every reason they don't, Tommie instilled things in the culture that helped ensure Walker Research would." He credited Tommie's business acumen with the company's fiscal responsibility, efforts to identify new revenue sources, and attention to return on investment. Walker lived "within its means," he said, a reflection of its founder's personal lifestyle. As one of her family members observed, putting it in terms Tommie would appreciate, "She certainly didn't live high on the hog!"

With Frank at the helm and her grandson Steve providing third-generation continuity at the company, Tommie remained on the board of directors but relinquished her role as chairman to Frank, who had the dual role of CEO. Jim Sammer, one of the first full-time employees of the company, became president and chief operating officer. And sales kept climbing – to $16 million in 1983, up almost 26 percent from the previous year, making Walker Research larger than such well-known competitors as the Gallup Organization, Louis Harris & Associates, and Yankelovich, Skelly & White. An article in the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper carried the headline, "Walker firm grew into giant of information."

It grew in other ways, as well. In 1984, the company was named one of the fastest-growing research firms by Advertising Age, with billings topping $20 million. Two new marketing divisions doubled the number of distinct operating units and plans were under way to move in 1985 to a new, 90,000-square-foot corporate headquarters at 3939 Priority Way, on Indianapolis's far north side.

Mindful that the company's size and diversity, coupled with the rapid changes occurring in technology and communication, were compounding the complexities of doing business, Frank appointed an outside advisory board. Its members reviewed, evaluated, and suggested actions on a variety of corporate matters and issues.

While it was true that Tommie had managed a much smaller company in a simpler time, Frank found that he could appreciate more and more the trials she had been through earlier. There must have been some scary times for Tommie, he thought, when a customer cut back on spending or an executive she was working with changed jobs. But she didn't express those concerns to Frank. Indeed, her extended family didn't believe she ever worried, given the complete lack of evidence that she was troubled by that emotion. Yet, reasoned Frank, she did worry. The responsibility she felt for other people was profound.

Now, in retirement, Tommie was finally able to enjoy more freedom from that kind of anxiety, although she never stopped being interested in the industry and in the company. In a newspaper interview she spoke eloquently of both. "Looking at Walker Research, Inc., and our industry today, and the scope of the studies being accomplished, I become ecstatic, recognizing that, with all this expertise, the basics in individuals – loyalty and enthusiasm – are still there. I look back with pride. I look forward with hope and belief."

Local newspapers were not the only publications still seeking Tommie's comments and insights, professional and otherwise. In May 1985, she sent a packet of materials to Jack Honomichl, the *Advertising Age* columnist and author, who was credited with literally defining the market research industry as the creator of its only top-company ranking. He also was an occasional

consultant to Walker Research, and while it's unclear why Tommie compiled and mailed the materials to him, their content is illuminating.

Tommie included in the packet a biography that was written in third person but included many of her own quotes. Reflecting her typical wit and humility, it read, in part, "Tommie is and always has been a family person. Therefore, as a community leader she was also a pioneer, serving on many boards that had not before included women... 'I was a Cub Scout den mother for six years at a time when the packs of 10 noisy boys met in the home'... which helps to understand why Tommie thought going door to door interviewing was fun...

"Tommie, although retired from Walker Research, Inc., remains a stockholder and serves on the Board of Directors while still maintaining personal friendships with many WR personnel with whom she worked. Today Tommie has turned one of her bedroom closets into a very 'private' office where she has a parking meter lamp that was in Walker Research's first reception room. [In reality, the lamp had been in the Consumer Test Center, sitting on a table with a small bowl of coins nearby that visitors could use to "feed the meter" and thus light the lamp. When the meter ran out, the lamp went off. Everyone loved it.] The walls are covered with some thirty plaques and awards received from participation in non-profit organizations... 'To me, these represent an important part of Walker Research's growth over the years – we had time to take an active role in our community.'"

This arrangement was so illustrative of Tommie: She was genuinely pleased to receive the awards represented by her collection of plaques and mementos and endlessly proud of everyone in the collage of family photos. But it would not be like Tommie to display them publicly; instead, she created a private space where she could enjoy them in solitude.

That space was a bedroom closet in the apartment where she and Andy had moved after deciding they no longer wanted the burden of the house they purchased together when they married. The apartment complex, like their house, was in the Indianapolis suburb of Carmel, and Tommie chose it because the residents included people of all ages, Steve Walker's wife, Brenda,

said. Everyone knew that Tommie enjoyed being around young people. Her granddaughter Karen put it this way: "Tommie talked to people of all ages as equals. I think she thought talking with young people kept her younger. She always enjoyed knowing what they did, their jargon, what music they were listening to – everything."

At the apartment, she and Andy continued to entertain, Tommie cooking "farm meals," as she called them, often incorporating vegetables from Andy's garden. "She'd invite us over for dinner and say she was just serving leftovers – but they weren't leftovers!" Brenda said. It was just Tommie's way of assuring her guests that she hadn't gone to great trouble for them so they would be sure to accept her invitation. The trick worked just about every time.

At Tommie's house, cocktail hours were long, and the conversation was inevitably about her guests. Always one to emphasize the importance of being a good listener, she would start conversations with Steve by saying, "I do the same thing every day. I want to know what you did. Tell me about your day."

While Tommie's enthusiasm, intellect, and wit were fully intact, her advancing age was starting to affect her energy level and her physical health. In the autumn of 1989, as the company prepared to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, Tommie fell and broke her hip. It was terrible timing, but even hospitalization and hip replacement surgery were not going to keep her from marking the occasion.

Employees and guests gathered at the historic Indiana Roof Ballroom for a black-tie gala on the evening of Friday, October 20, and at the appointed time, with the help of what was then the latest technology, Frank placed a call to his mother's hospital room that was patched into the ballroom's sound system. Tommie's photo was on a large screen in front of the room. Years later, Susie Collins, by now one of Tommie's good friends, remembered it as if it were yesterday: "As I recall, she refused pain medicine that night so that she would be clear-headed to talk to everyone, and when her voice came over the phone

it was just as if she walked up on the stage – she lit up the occasion. As soon as she said hello you could feel her presence in the room."

Brad Boyd, another employee at the time, had a special soft spot for the company founder, made all the more sensitive by the events of that gala evening. When Brad was just a child, Tommie had lived in the apartment above his family's and on more than one occasion involved them in her studies. By complete coincidence, he was now working at the company she founded and on this night, videotaping employees' comments. His repeated refrain as he conducted those interviews succinctly described the ambience: "There's a lot of love in this room."

And indeed there was. The symbol for the fiftieth anniversary celebration was a 1939 walking Lady Liberty half dollar, symbolic not only because it was minted the year of the company's founding, but also because fifty cents was Tommie's hourly income that first year. Now, as she lay in a hospital bed, the "walking lady" took on an especially poignant meaning.

That year Tommie received a Sagamore of the Wabash, at the time the highest honor the governor of Indiana could bestow for distinguished service to the state. Achieving that recognition and in the same year resigning her role on the Walker board, Tommie was mindful that the company's fiftieth anniversary year was an especially meaningful one for her personally.

She was also aware that Andy was declining. At first, she reacted to his tendency to repeat himself, his failing hearing, and other small matters with typical gentle humor. One friend recalled that Tommie would discretely give her husband a hand signal to let him know he had already told the story he was beginning to repeat to a visitor, sparing Andy the embarrassment of doing so.

Kevin Connelly remembered an incident that crystallized for him many aspects of Tommie's personality and her marriage. "I recall her wanting my help with the green beans," Kevin began the story. "I was helping her in the kitchen and we were sitting down. Tommie didn't really need the help – it was

more of a way to connect. She took the time as she often did in asking about how things were going at school and the after school activities I was involved in doing.

"During the course of our discussion, in walked Andy, and she spoke briefly about how good the green beans looked from Andy's farm crop. Andy just smiled at Tommie and acknowledged her and walked out of the kitchen. As he left the kitchen, he adjusted his hearing aid. Tommie looked back to me and said, 'I don't think he heard a thing I said....but I love him.'"

"Never complain about growing old. It's a privilege denied to many," Tommie admonished many a conversation partner. Uncomplaining, then, and admitting that they both needed help, Andy and Tommie moved from their Carmel apartment to the Forum, a continuing-care retirement community nearby. They took two apartments, knocked out a wall and created a spacious home. Almost immediately, everyone there seemed to know Tommie, including the staff. One confidant thought the process was expedited by Tommie's habit of slipping generous tips to the employees.

Even though their health was faltering, Tommie and Andy still spent time in Florida, and it was there that Tommie fell ill and was hospitalized in the winter of 1992. The frightening episode led to an even more sobering diagnosis of colon cancer. This, it was clear, would be one of Tommie's greatest personal challenges.

Frank was scheduled to travel to Australia on business, but when he got word of Tommie's illness, he quickly cancelled the trip. While Jane and Dottie flew back to Indianapolis with Andy, Frank remained in Sarasota with his mother for several days until she, too, could travel north. "Those were some of the most meaningful days in my adult life with her," Frank remembered.

Tommie faced her illness with characteristic courage and a refusal to focus on herself. She'd never been one to complain of illness or pain, and she wasn't going to start now. Even with close friends and most family members, she wouldn't speak of her medical problems, including on the occasions when

they visited her in the hospital. That's where Wendy Walker, David's wife, clearly saw that Tommie's illness was "obviously something serious, and Tommie was very aware of its severity. I think it was Tommie's faith that gave her some peace. There wasn't a panic." It was Tommie's faith, Wendy said, that was the beginning of her own "journey to get to know God."

Donna Walker, married to Charlie Walker Jr., was also inspired by the way Tommie dealt with her illness. "She handled that as beautifully as she did everything else. She wasn't going to sit and brood or feel sorry for herself," she said with admiration. Mike Sears, Tommie's financial advisor, had his own insights when he met with Tommie. "When she was sick, she was okay that this was a step from here to eternity. She had a strong relationship with God. The core part of Tommie was her Christian faith. Her nature came from this and she lived it out."

"She always seemed so strong," one of those closest to her said, summarizing the observations of countless others.

As Tommie's physical health worsened, Andy was also growing more disabled, and his condition soon required a move to the memory care unit. Perhaps for medicinal purposes, perhaps simply in an act of compassion, a close family friend and physician prescribed a nightly Scotch for Andy, who had always enjoyed cocktail hour with Tommie and their friends.

By the time Tommie was inducted into the Central Indiana Business Hall of Fame on March 25, 1992, she had grown too weak to walk. But she wasn't going to miss such a special occasion. The *Indianapolis Star* reported, "She was lifted to the stage in her wheelchair Wednesday night at the Indiana Roof Ballroom, but Tommie Walker Anderson stood and accepted her induction into the Central Indiana Business Hall of Face with a clear and strong voice. The founder of Walker Research (in 1939) shared honors with two other laureates, Eli Lilly and Co. chairman Dick Wood, and, posthumously, Chuck Stimming Sr., who was chairman of France Stone Co."

Tommie told the audience that night, "My degrees were enthusiasm, a lot of

energy, and I guess a lot of willingness to work." Those degrees, which she held as birthright and by the force of her character, were far more meaningful and contributed more to her success than any she could have received from a university.

Less than two months later she was honored again, this time for "outstanding community contributions" with the Hoosier Heritage Award from Heritage Place of Indianapolis, a comprehensive human services organization for older adults. Now frail, Tommie was able to attend, but almost immediately afterward she took a serious turn for the worse and was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital. It was now in new facilities but, ironically, the same institution where her mother had died of the same illness so many years before.

Andy, too ill to be with her, remained at the Forum. But family and friends kept her company. For a time, her sons Tom and Frank took turns staying with her through the night, not wanting her to be alone. She was even able to hold her new great-granddaughter, Tori, a joy to her and a reminder to the baby's father, Steve Walker, that, "Even as she was dying she was interested in others."

The night of June 26, 1992, Malcolm Baker visited Tommie in her hospital room. Malcolm had known her for more than thirty years and considered her family. "I loved her to death!" he was known to say. He and his wife had been in the fun group with Tommie and Andy, and the two couples had shared countless memories. When Malcolm's wife became seriously ill, he often turned to Tommie for her kind words, homey stories, and wise counsel. They became mutual confidants: In a rare departure for her, Tommie shared her own concerns during their long conversations. Now, as he sat by her bedside, Tommie invited Malcolm to stay and reminisce. That evening she talked not of herself, but of her pride in and love for her family.

On Saturday evening, June 27, 1992, Tommie slipped away. It was just a month after her eighty-fourth birthday. Officially she was honorary chairman emeritus of Walker, which now had annual revenues of $38 million and three

divisions. Many of the 1,000 employees had come onboard after Tommie retired; the majority had never met her. But all knew who she was and what she stood for: The principals and values on which she founded the company and by which she lived her life were still the bedrock of the company where they worked.

By a strange coincidence, the Walker company picnic was scheduled for the following day. Susie Collins was making final preparations when she got the call that Tommie had died, a call she'd been dreading but expecting. The picnic committee posted a large photo of Tommie, with her birth and death dates on it, where people could see it as they walked in. "The news didn't put a damper on the day," Susie said, "and she wouldn't have wanted it to."

For five hours on June 30, friends, family, employees, community members, and customers filed through the mortuary to express their sympathies, share their grief, and recount their stories. Knowing Tommie as most did, there was also a lot of laughter in the room, which was filled with scores of floral arrangements, each a memorial to the woman who, long ago, had realized how much flowers meant to those in bereavement.

The next day, people gathered at St. Luke's Methodist Church in Indianapolis for the "Service of Worship in Celebration of the Life of Tommie Walker Anderson." Two of Tommie's grandchildren were asked to speak: Steve, who was following in her professional footsteps, and Linda, whose natural public speaking ability was recognized by the family and made her the logical representative from Tom's branch.

By the time the last of the mourners had departed, nearly five hundred signatures filled the book recording those who had come over two days to pay their respects to a woman who had touched their lives. Afterward, as the casket left the church and when it arrived at Crown Hill Cemetery, her pall bearers were, fittingly, all members of her family: David Walker, Karen Walker, Steve Walker, Mike Walker, Leah Walker, Linda Thrapp, Kevin Connelly, and Kitty Connelly.

For those who wished to make a memorial contribution, the family suggested two of Tommie's most cherished organizations, the Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Little Red Door. She had given so much to them both, but, the family added in the spirit she would have applauded, the donor alternatively could choose a favorite charity of his or her own.

That idea fit perfectly with the inscription on Tommie's order of service. It was composed by John Wesley, the eighteenth-century theologian who helped found the Methodist Church, yet it seemed written especially for Tommie.

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

Those words described exactly how Tommie lived her life. Her spirit would live on in the way her company conducted its business and its citizenship, in the cherished traditions of her family, in the fond memories of friends and colleagues. Tommie had been an example and an inspiration, and the instructions of that eighteenth-century inscription defined the legacy she passed along to those who have followed.

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Appendix

Tommie's Mother - Bertha Cravens Cole's Paper/Speech

A woman of modest means and basic education but enormous generosity and exemplary character, Bertha Cravens Cole was a powerful influence in her children's lives. As the youngest child, Tommie especially received the benefit of Bertha's wisdom, garnered from rearing a large family and coping with life's adversities. Tommie often spoke of the values her mother taught her and consistently emulated her mother's spirit of gratitude. In middle age, Bertha prepared this presentation, believed to be for a women's group at her church. It sets down in clear, memorable prose the beliefs and code of conduct that she lived by herself and that she gave to her children as their birthright and treasured inheritance. It's easy to see that Tommie, in her everyday interactions and attitudes, took her beloved mother's counsel to heart.

PAPER
by
Bertha Alice Cole
Circa 1943
(Believed to be written to be used for a talk to her Women's Society)

Life is like a ship on a voyage, to reach ports the ship should have a chart and a compass. Without these instruments the captain is at the mercy of the sea and the sky. On the voyage of life we need a chart and a compass. A definite aim,

an ideal, something to lead us on. Perhaps the best advice which was given to anyone is something that runs like this. Forget yourself in your interest in those around you. Work hard, play hard, but remember life is more fully lived when shared with other people. An experience of someone we have learned to know may have no bearing on our lives at the moment, but sometime it might turn out to be just what we need to cope with some situation. Even curiosity about people is something to be cultivated. If we can feel that every new person we meet, no matter how dull he or she may seem to us, they probably have something to contribute to our knowledge of life. For to have a friend we must be a friend and one doesn't have to be rich, beautiful, or talented in order to make friends. All one has to do is to be kind, thoughtful, and considerate. Kindly consideration is truly an art. It's especially the kindness of compassion. All kindness is not expressed in actions. Often times it is demonstrated in restraint, but comes to us through the situation of someone else. Must a returning tourist enthuse about her glorious vacation to a neighbor or friend whose recent misfortunes have not permitted a similar pleasure? Must the happy girl who is soon to be married flash her brand new solitaire before the remembering eyes of a girl whose romance has lately broken up? Must joyous relatives of homecoming soldiers elate their glad news to a "Gold Star Mother"? Not if they remember the kindness of compassion.

Another fine art is the art of appreciation or gratitude. If only we practice using that two-word phrase "Thank You" it will win us friends no matter what our walk in life may be. Thank you notes can be a blessing to the sender as well as to the one who receives them. Your influence expressed on a piece of paper is greater than you perhaps realize. Think of the power you have in this point of your pin. You can bring comfort to a struggling friend, pleasure to some hostess, encouragement to someone who needs it badly. If a radio program pleases you, vote for its continuance. Lots of good programs leave the air, not because they have no audience, but because the people who like them are not note writers. Don't think your opinion doesn't matter. It is as important as anyone's in the United States, so express yourself. Notes written to congratulate a friend or acquaintance for something they have done, showing your interest, are almost never forgotten. Never put anything in a note or letter that you don't want to become a permanent impression. The

written word smiles deep. The reader can't see your smile or hear your soft tone. He sees the word only. An encouraging, pleasing note will be reread many times down the years. Haven't you always felt the impulse to keep those letters that speak of some of your better points? And when you read them later, isn't the glow just as bright as it was when you first read it? Tell people their faults (if you must) by the spoken word, but write only of their virtues if you want to do a great good. It pays to be gracious. There's the art of being tactful, well, grant that we are or try to be tactful, the average person can check remarks they should never have made. Even if you joke about an honest means of making a living, it's sure to be the occupation of someone's uncle's, cousin's mother-in-law. You may imply someone's job is easy, but no job is easy if well done. Or telling a devoted mother her child looks sickly or small for its age is wrong (Mildred's T.B.)

The art of enthusiasm is not to be overlooked. Whenever you speak, whether you are giving a book review for several hundred listeners or discussing a cake recipe over the back fence with your neighbor, never be ashamed to show enthusiasm. Sincere and unbridled enthusiasm is a rare and precious commodity. Whether it be over people, books, scenery, music, or even bargain basement sales. And the magic of friendliness. Don't you just love friendly people? It is such a Christian attitude, just being friendly. Yes, one may go to church every Sunday and read their Bible religiously and yet be on the selfish side of life. While sincere friendliness comes from the inner soul and reaches out to all whom they come in contact.

In the great scheme of things, whoever you are, there is only one of you. Among all the millions of people, there never has been and never will be anyone just like you. There is some one place which only you can fill. Oliver Wendell Holmes was small in stature. One day he was present at a meeting where everyone there seemed so tall in comparison. An acquaintance jokingly remarked, "Dr. Holmes don't you feel rather small among these big fellas?" "I do," replied Dr. Holmes. "I feel like a dime among a lot of pennies."

Most of us worry too much. Of course we think it bothers no one else. But it hurts our home, our families, and our friends. Worry is interest paid on

trouble before it falls due. Mark Twain once said, "I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened." Two generations ago, a very sensitive man in Boston, opened his morning paper and discovered to his dismay that it contained several false statements about him. He hurried to the house of his Minister and demanded an interview. What would his Minister advise him to do? Should he demand a public apology from the Editor or file a suit for damages? His Minister listened for a few moments, then said quietly, "What should you do my dear sir, do nothing. Half the people who bought that paper never saw the article about you, half the people who saw it never read it, and half the people who did read it, didn't understand it. And half the people who understood it, didn't believe it. Half the people who believed it, are people of no consequence anyway. How much wiser and better was the Minister's way of living.

Don't cheat yourself, it's your life. Don't let anyone else decide for you. Only you can tell. We can be like the man at the cafeteria who puts up a fight for what he wants. Except we don't want to be like him. He pushed himself ahead of the line during a rush hour, selected a tray with care, then chose a fork, ran his fingers over the tines, and discarded it. Knives, spoons were all fingered with deliberation. The line formed behind him. Someone said go around them. Someone else said "Sand in the Gears", but he just sailed along. At the meat section he rested his elbows on the rack. "Steak, no not that piece, the one over there. No not that one, the one over there. No not that one, the other one." He got his steak, looked at it gloriously and said "Ain't you got any others?" "No sir, that's all we have." He pushed his plate back at the girl. "There, gimme chicken. No not that piece, the one underneath." People shuffled and shuffled their trays. As I headed my way toward a vacant table I heard the cashier's "please, please." And I thought please dear God, please keep me remembering that there are others in this world besides myself. Keep me from being Sand in the Gears of Life- - - to leave it said of us that we are charming and gracious is a compliment we love to hear, but if we can be JUST THAT in the face of grief and disappointment, how well we deserve the compliment. If we can brush the tears away and learn to temper our tears with a faith in a better tomorrow where someone comes to us. We should have our cry. Quite often it is a relief – it is difficult to remember sometimes

that circumstances both good and bad – are only temporary. Our homes, our families, our talents, our youth, our very lives, are only loaned to us. We must give them back – one by one whether we will it or not. You can stop brooding if you are only willing to admit life has other things for you to do. It is foolish to believe your future is empty. There is something ahead for you. It will either be a bright tomorrow or twice spent in mourning the past. The choice is up to you. Of course no one expects us to ruthlessly throw off grief – but we can try to concentrate more on what we have to be thankful for. It's not always easy. I'll admit it, but there are many things left that you can treasure. Beautiful memories, years of companionship, and the privilege of holding something precious in your heart for all time. Be grateful for these things. It is one of the fine arts of life. Marie Dressler, who at times had so little to be cheerful about, that she forced herself to cut jokes and cartoons out of newspapers to read while she rode on subways and buses hunting for work. Then she started reading them to other people. Her own gloom vanished when she learned to laugh and make others laugh. Carrie Jacobs-Bond, who wrote A Perfect Day and Just Awearyin' for you, didn't begin her career until she was well along in life. She couldn't sell her songs at first and went to people's doors and sang them herself in order to sell copies. Finally she created a demand for them that spread all over the world.

All of us know the value of being able to remember and we are told as age creeps upon us that memory fails. All this is true as far as it goes, but has it occurred to you that the skill of forgetting is as important as the art of remembering? It is just as important to be able to forget certain things as to remember other matters. More grief is caused by failure to forget than by failure to remember. One of the greatest followers of Christ had this idea long ago. He said forget the things that are believed and press forward. What are some of the things that should be forgotten? The slights and hurts caused by others. They are not worth remembering. No matter what anyone says to us or does to us. We ought to forget it. We should forget our mistakes, no person ever lived who did not make mistakes. They teach us to be humble and help us to be more tolerant of the mistakes of others. Some great man said "Be thankful for our mistakes, it keeps us poor in our ego." When asked why he talked so much of the future he said, "Because I expect to spend the rest of my life there."

We should be glad we are an average person. The triumphs of force can never compensate for the simple pleasures of a normal life. Average people if they only knew it are much luckier than those who make headlines in the newspapers. Famous people are like gold fish in a transparent bowl. They have no privacy.

We should learn to relax whether working, playing, or resting. In the rush of the present day, we have forgotten in part how to live. Joy in sunlight – flowers and birds is left chiefly to the poets. We often forget the value of a smile. It creates happiness in a home, fosters good-will in business, and is a countersign of friends, and rest to the weary. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, and something that is of no earthly use until it is given away. If someone is too tired to give you a smile, give him one of yours anyway. Nobody needs a smile as much as those who have none left to give.

I like the term Humble Mobility. I saw a sample of it this morning in a grocery. The only penalty of growing old that I deeply dread is having to give up going to the grocery. It's life to me. For it is there that I brush elbows with and beg pardon of a good cross section of my fellow men and women. This very morning I had the "not too unusual, but always pleasant experience" of having a jolly faced woman say, "I've got a lot more to check out than you. Would you like to go ahead of me?" I can always whistle the rest of the day after somebody does that to me, because it reminds me that there is unselfishness in the world. Yes, unselfishness is another real art added to our living if we but practice it as we should.

Let us not give up in trying to attain personal achievements that make living worthwhile. For it is later than we think. When we do something to make someone else happy, we create happiness in ourselves. For it's been said that, "We cannot spill perfume on others without getting a little of it on ourselves".

Bertha Alice Cravens was born December 22, 1878, in Tipton County, Indiana. She married Charles Wesley Cole at age 19 on January 12, 1898. She was educated in the Tipton County public schools. She had seven children in 10 years, all born at home on their farm, four who lived to adulthood. She died March 4, 1952.

Letter (January 27, 1952) to Mid (Tommie's sister) soon after Frank Sr.'s death on January 17, 1952

Tommie's confidante, friend and correspondent was her older sister, Mid, who lived in Dayton, Ohio. Seven years but little else separated the two: aside from the year they and their families lived under one roof, they had to keep in touch by writing frequently and visiting as often as time and budgets permitted. Eventually, when long-distance phone calls became more affordable, conversations replaced their confiding, teasing and newsy letters. But for many years, when both were young wives and mothers, they shared an intimate correspondence. So it was natural that, in the days following her husband's sudden and shocking death, Tommie would turn to Mid with her innermost thoughts and fears. In this letter, Tommie paints a poignant picture of her life as a new widow. Yet even in this most grievous of times, she uses gentle humor to reassure her sister that she will be okay. She might have been the youngest of her siblings, but Tommie also seemed to be the strongest and most resilient.

4:30 PM – Sunday (1/27/1952)

Dearest Ones,

Tom has been taken downtown to meet his ride and Frankie has gone to a meeting of the JR. Officers, and Dottie and I are settling down to some projects. I've a huge washing awaiting me, but I haven't been able to tear myself down to it – rather thought someone would be calling on us – as they have continued to do all week, in person or by phone.

So much to say to you. I too, wish we were "geographically" located where we could talk more often, but after all Dayton & Indianapolis are close and we are close wherever we live.

Thank you for your nice letter. Also, tell Johnnie & Billie how much I appreciated hearing from them. I read them all to Clara L & Charley, Thurs. night when we were out to dinner (Frankie & I). They are my life savers and are giving me every minute of their time. They told me you had called your

thanks, but if you can squeeze a minute this week, I'd appreciate your dropping them a note – wise cracks mixed with the sentimental truth but expressing, as only you can do, my (and yours) telling you how much they are doing for me. Charley has spent some portion of every day with me, they've cleaned my slip covers, in one afternoon for me. Last night we had the 3 of them to dinner. They brought Dottie a pretty blouse for her birthday, peppermint ice cream for dessert and the 7 of us (Dottie) sat down to our first dinner here without big Frank. I asked Tom & Dottie, in advance to consider themselves hosts so I could spend time going over the cards with our guests. So they rose to the occasion nicely! I had Tom's favorite dinner of Swiss steak, the shelf lima beans, hot rolls & next we made a sign in advance for the door – "Sleeping Room for Rent – Prefer bachelor 22 yrs. old – white - Under $10.00 a week " – for young Charles benefit so he got a bang out of it as he walked in with a roll of toilet tissue for me – in answer to my saying the agency had always paid for ours & we'd have to start buying our own! They are "tops" and next to your family, they come next!

Carl stayed until Wed. Took the 3 of us to dinner, Mon. at I.A.C., then Tues. night Carl, Frankie, & I ate out here in the neighborhood. Wed. night we went to Paulsen's (I read Alice what you wrote about her). Thurs. to C. & Charley Fri. eve. Dottie, Frankie, & I ate at our favorite café at 52nd as we had company up until 6PM and I had been to court, S.S. & various other appts. that I felt by the time I went by to see MO [family name for Tommie's mother], take her order for supplies, and do the family marketing – it could be called a day. Tom walked in at 10:30 Friday night, surprising us to the extent Dottie broke out in hives with excitement!!

Flowers and cards continue to come. Two new fresh ones arrived yesterday which kept the record up for the week – new ones every day, and an ex-interviewer brought us by a large standing rib roast, piping hot Thurs. eve. So we've had a class "A" sandwich filling to supplement the peanut butter. Dottie has been taking our inventory on remembrances and it stands now about 175 floral pieces, 200 some cards & letters, 17 telegrams, 1000 + people at the mortuary and then the food and etc. We believe, the boys and I that Frank's work was done here on Earth and that – as he himself told me on

Sunday before he left – '52 is going to be our most wonderful year! If we believe on a world here after, then we must believe '52 is Frank's triumph year and that things that are coming to us are making it that kind of year for us too. Certainly, money left us, good as it would be to have some ready cash to work out things. No dollars could buy the friendships and expressions of same, he has left in the hearts of his fellow men, for which we will reap the returns upon.

Don Satterfield took me to the lunch Wed. & then back to the office to talk business. He gave me a check for $300 for Frank's three days with him, and from him, not me, has offered to loan me any amt. I need to clean up all outstanding debts.

He said he'd consider it a privilege to do so, he loved Frank so much and had wonderful plans for him! You can understand what this means to me – to be able to counsel and discuss all "financials" with Charley, but also to be able to work them out myself – especially through a friend of Frank's.

Now for Mo. You are so right about needing outside help! More than ever before I saw it displayed this week. Tues., I had been over for an hour or so. Wed. I hadn't had a chance to call – even, so I had Frankie call her & say I was coming for lunch on Thurs., bringing the lunch! When I arrived she had put on a dress for me (as she said she did for you, but we were so late getting back Sun. she could hardly stand it) – meantime Kenny had called her & came for lunch too, stopping, getting groceries Mo had asked him to, so he could have a good square meal and Mo tried very hard to put a front on for me, BUT the conversation always reverted back to her condition and how she would have starved if it hadn't been for Kenny during the War sending her money. Kenny reminded her that she gave him a lot of 5 & 10's when he came back & Mo's answer was "why Kenny that was just what you sent me to save – I couldn't have lived. I'd of starved if it hadn't been for your thoughtfulness. I've always said if I ever had a few hundred the first thing I'd do would give it to you to help you when you needed it most for you saved my Life" & on & on. Frank's words in my office that day, you'll recall leaned toward working out something to; number I protecting Mo's welfare by using we girls as heirs – to process

funds through. The week before Frank died, was interrupted several times by at least listening & counseling with Kenny on finances. Whether he worked out anything I don't know – I imagine not, since Kenny & Norma stopped in this a.m. & were still hungry after living 2 weeks on $2.00. I asked them if they didn't have pay days any more, & Norma said "yes, but payments take it all." After they left Tom & Dottie held a discussion that they bet Johnnie & Billie worked out their problems better than that. It's so hard to write the worn out record, but I've digressed here, from Mo, but back to her. Fri. (after my spending 2 ½ hrs. Thurs. with her) night, Dottie & I stopped in and I wasn't sure she was going to draw her breath by herself!! Telephone calls had upset her, things people said to her were so inconsiderate. Why Mo Gaddis called for one & said she'd had a shock and when she went ahead & told me it was first Jack home & Mo G. said all broken up like, she had to go to N. Vernon rite away to be with Jack & they didn't know where Jack would be sent. Mo went on almost hysterically that she told Mo G., Tommie didn't know where Tom was going either. Went on and on that Mo liked Jack better than Billie & Nancy & I reminded her that it was only natural that Mo Gaddis lived in Jackie Bill's home most all his 22 years, that she would be closer in feeling toward him, but I was sure she loved Billie & Nan equally as much --- of course, mom is totally blind to her own over indulgence of K... I haven't had a chance to talk to Dr. Dowd and I have heard no more from Dr. Bob since we saw him here last Sunday. I believe so much – 100% as you do, she needs outside help, but unfortunately our way of life, in these fast days of living, I don't think even Dr.'s or ministers can or do, give enough time to those folks who are on the hilltop, tottering – about to fall on the side where they remain dependent on others. Help & strength seems to have to come from within first, the desire to live healthy & happily before outsiders can help. Perhaps, they go together – like a successful marriage – hand in hand - the spiritual and mental and physical. I'm conceited enough that if I were free to devote my entire life for the next 2 months to Mo, and that my every effort & thought was directed to her, I could "save" her, but as it is – it seems to take all the strength I can force out of myself to go on living up to what all of you and our hundreds of wonderful friends have made me believe I can and must do. I'm quite sure when I get rid of that $500 a month over head, hanging over my head at the office, the Ford sold and the personal bank notes consolidated and

under one head, I can soon have more time to think of ways to get Mo to help herself. But I'm realizing too, she isn't getting any better. I had a long talk with Ruth yesterday, read her your letter (changed one thing – R & K & N to "we") and Ruth so approved of all your words of wisdom to Mo, but I agree with Ruth, those words like my "drop ins" are only momentarily lifts and nothing that can be referred to as the answer to the problem. My summary of Mo's situation is – she has been very ill & suffered intense pain – still does somewhat, but now she is suffering mostly from a nervous breakdown and what can we do to bring her out of it?

Are you still planning on coming over next weekend? I'll appreciate it if you'll let me know when, if you are coming, so I can plan to spend every minute possible with you. Meantime, I'll try to make some practical approach to the all over picture. Meantime, know how very much I appreciate your unlimited and unselfish time with us last week. Today is the first day that I can say the dull thud in the heart has been replaced with a horrible, lonely, restless feeling. You might say it's the first day I've felt lonesome and empty inside.

Frankie went to his church for breakfast this a.m. & when he came back he'd gone down to the cemetery – by himself. He wanted to know if it'd be alright if he took "Janie's plant down cause they'd taken all the flowers away & the dirt sunk down about 6 inches." I told him he could but, I thought they might remove the potted plant to add more dirt and I was sure his Daddy would like him enjoying Janie's plant tonight while he watched TV – as he always does on Sun. eve. on the floor between Frank and I. He's been a darling. Gets up first, puts a pillow under my head, the morning paper on my face – turns on the radio – has the teakettle brewing and is talking a mile a minute about our "budget plans" for our new life together. He's made his bed every morning & picked up all his clothes. I'm sure it'll wear off – but it's cute while it lasts and when I need it most!

Kitty left for Delaware this p.m. She was sorry Nancy wouldn't be there (I didn't think she would) for she planned to ask Nan & Harry to dinner - first as I would. Kitty is wonderful to carry on for me.

We have learned from "officials" that the radio stations and the telephone company lines were jammed at the time of the shocking news came forth. We cannot believe – so many friends are ours!

Will you kindly send me the following addresses: Brandenburgs, Shupes, Culbertsons? Their flowers were lovely and they were all so thoughtful to remember us. I feel differently about flowers now – they mean so much more and like kind words, they soften the sorrow in one's heart and mind.

Again, be sure to remember me to Billie, Johnnie and Nan. Tom had a wonderful letter from Billie too he said!

Love,
Tommie

Tommie's Letter to Dr. Bob Pierce, May 1, 1952

Tommie's faith was a comfort and source of strength, as many of her friends and family attested. For many years her pastor was Dr. Robert Pierce, whom she called Dr. Bob, of the Broadway Methodist Church in Indianapolis. He was steadfast in his support of her during the winter of 1952, when in quick succession Tommie lost her husband and her mother. In this letter to her spiritual guide and friend, Tommie expresses her gratitude for his support and, in a rare departure, permits herself a few sentences expressing her grief and loneliness. What she and Frank Sr. had hoped would be their "triumphant year," was in fact one of her darkest and most trying. Yet, as always, her resilience and optimism persisted.

The Rev. Doctor Robert B. Pierce
Broadway Methodist Church
2820 Broadway
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Doctor Bob:
For weeks I have wanted to sit down and chat with you (that's the way I feel – whether it's in person or by letter), and express to you our appreciation for all the help you have given us these past few weeks, which should almost be referred to now as months.

What better time than now, at the close of my first Mother's Day without my Mother, my husband, and Tom?

But let's go back to the middle of January, for just a few moments, at the time of Frank's going. You were most gracious to say it was just a part of your work to be of service to us inasmuch as we were members of your Congregation and, that, I can understand but for me to tell others and not you, how very much your comforting words and presence meant to the boys and me, would not be representative of our way of living.

I believe that until one actually experiences the death of someone very near and dear in their own immediate circle, or some other soul-reaching trial, can they know the true meaning of Faith and from where it comes. I've wondered many times of late, what people who don't have it think about. Perhaps they are the resentful, complaining, self-centered people whom we all know, who never quite adjust themselves to their new and different situation. However, I want you to know the things you said and the way you said them made the boys and me feel, in spite of our heavy hearts and tears, that Frank had actually received a very wonderful promotion!

You made it possible for me to believe to the extent that I was able to recall and cherish some of Frank's last spoken words to me, when he said, "Oh, Tommie – '52 is without a doubt going to be our triumphant year! Of course, he was referring at the time to his new business connection; to Dottie and Tom's approaching marriage and - - - to the fifty dirty one dollar bills young Frank had saved from his after-school work and placed under this year's Christmas tree with a note attached, "To the most wonderful Dad and Mom in the world – here's a start for our new home – not a house – that we've planned to build in '52."

Well, we've had to rearrange our thinking and that's where you come into our picture again. "To know happiness, we must know sorrow" and now we do know the meaning of both. So much for that – but I wanted you to know, Doctor Bob, the important role you have taken in our everyday life and, further, I want you to know that I have not had one single day since January 17th that I have not had pleasant, good things come my way that have offset the unpleasant - - - but, you see, it was you who gave me the vision.

I have come to the conclusion we, as people or as a nation, are ready to summarize our sadness, in fact almost glamorize it, but we never remember to accept happiness in that same way. I can't remember anyone ever saying to me, "My, Tommie, you've had lots of happiness all at one time – you've had more than your share", but how many, many times have I been told the opposite since giving up Frank and my Mother.

But – back to you! Never have I known friends, after they've sent flowers, letters, or called in person to show respect to a family, who have written follow-up letters to say how very inspiring Frank's memorial services were, and how privileged they were to be counted as friends. Yet, that's exactly what's happened dozens of times to us. Most typical of these are, for example: Mr. William Owens, Public Relations Director of the Girdler Corporation of Louisville, who wrote: "I arrived just in time for the services, accompanied by Mrs. Owens and our two sons. The words of your Church's Pastor were, I believe, the most moving and inspiring I have ever heard." Mr. Carl Henrickson, Vice President and General Manager of a New York Marketing Firm, S-D Surveys, Inc., 30 Rockefeller Plaza (for whom I am Central Regional Supervisor) wrote back and said, "I feel I gained much more than I was able to give in the way of helpfulness and comfort on my mission to Indianapolis. Meeting your boys, Dottie, your relatives and many friends has enriched my life. Pastor 'Doctor Bob' Pierce gave me a message I'll never forget – to have heard his real inspirational words, and to be with the Walkers and see how valiant folks meet the departure of loved ones, gave me an excellent example of when I, too, must face the inevitable occurrences as the passing of a member of my family".

Mrs. Mary Schaefer, 3323 Broadway, Indianapolis, and co-owner of the Schaefer Furniture Manufacturing Company, wrote: "I can't tell you the strength and courage I felt from the words of your pastor and the services for Frank, and I felt privileged to be among those who came to pay tribute to a fine life, excellently lived, and an inspiration for those of us who plod along our little course doing what we can as best we can – and I went away feeling comforted that all would be well with you and your fine boys."

And, still another came from Mr. Robert Heath, Chemical Engineer and Vice President of Clemene Manufacturing Company "I drove as fast as my Cadillac would take me, only to arrive at the door of Shirley Brothers at 1:30 but I was unable to get inside - - - all I can say, Tommie, is your Minister must have been an inspiration to your many friends who were able to be inside and hear, for I observed the peaceful expressions on their faces and heard favorable comments from them as they left".

I could go on and on, if the time permitted me to write and you to read, but I'll close by asking your permission for the Walkers to continue to call you "our Doctor Bob", a title that makes you seem closer to us and by briefly relating to you what this Mother's Day has been like to me.

My sister and I invited our Mother's two dear friends from Tipton, Indiana to spend the day with us. They came in true country fashion loaded with things from their garden and in time to worship with us. From there, we took them to the Athletic Club for a real treat for them "to eat out in a real nice place." Then, I went to the Indiana State Girl's School at Clermont to attend the dedication of the lovely new school building and to see "my 14 daughters – the Camp Fire Girls – who are, for the majority, paying a price because their Mothers did not add any one of the four sides to their homes. From late afternoon on throughout the evening, I spent the time alone with Frankie – just having a wonderful talk.

Perhaps it was the Mother's day card fastened to a string that lead to our ice box where a corsage was waiting for me, tagged: "Mom – it's for you to wear to Church tomorrow – Frank", or the long distance call from Baltimore at 8:00 A.M. this morning from Tom – just to wish me a happy day, and his ending the conversation by saying, "Say 'hello' to Doctor Bob for me and when you have a few moments to spare, write me what he talked about today" that has made me stop procrastinating and settle down to writing this letter of thanks to you tonight.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

P.S. I spoke at the Kemp M.E. Methodist Church in Tipton the other night, before the mothers and daughters at their Annual Banquet, and several people asked me the time of the services at Broadway, the location, etc. 'Peers as how you established some fanfare in my old hometown.

P.S. again – I am enclosing my "survey" sheet. I really enjoyed this inasmuch as surveys are my business.

Letter From Frank Jr. Accepting Job with Walker

Even though Frank and Tommie had long discussed the concept of his joining Walker Research after he completed his military service, there was something truly exciting for both of them about the formal agreement. In his February 1960 letter accepting Tommie's employment offer, Frank addresses his mother as one business person to another but quickly assumes the warm and easy style they shared. With this letter, a new chapter started not only for Frank and Tommie, but also for the company. Beating the odds, it was remaining a family-owned company with qualified family members in management for a second generation. And Frank would soon exhibit the skills and talents, complementary to those of his mother that would propel the firm into exciting new territory.

785th Radar Sq. (SAGE)
Finley AFS, North Dakota
February 28, 1960

Mrs. Tommie Walker
Walker Research Service
1930 East 46th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Tommie,

This letter will serve as my official acceptance of your very wonderful offer of employment. This start sounds somewhat formal, but there are a few things which I would like to comment on in an official way.

The title "Director of Sales" sounds like my real cup of tea. And after two years in Finley the Maintenance Manager Position even sounds great. This last thought may change when I return to the office after Sales Executive, for instance, to mop floors - - but right now the next thirteen weeks cannot go fast enough.

The June 6th date is fine and as our plans stand now we will for sure stop in South Bend. On a closer look at the calendar last weekend I find we will be

leaving Finley in the middle of the three day, Memorial Day weekend. Since we do not have to set any records we probably will just take our time.

For a start, the car project should be fun and I am sure that there are many other "getting settled" items. Here I would like to make a request. The few days I have visited the office there seemed to be a great amount of jumping from one activity to another. Now don't get me wrong- - I know this is part of the business and am able to do this also with half the ability with which you do. I also realize that the few days I have been in the office it was part of your plan for me to see as much as possible. But (here's the request finally) for the first few days I would like to do some study and observing on my own. For instance, one of the biggest selling tools, that I see, in this business is the ability to show "new" clients how similar problems have been handled in the past by WRS. Although I do know, or have heard, most of the names of our clients I do not know specific problems and conclusions that we reached. So, for a few days I would like to read past reports, study files, watch Kay, have discussions with Kitty, etc.

As you said, now we'll talk money. The salary, I believe, is very (if not more than) fair. And let me say right now I plan to earn every penny of it. The vacation plan I buy in part. I will accept, and would like to take one week. I don't feel it is right but- - dog-gone it- - - I do want to make the lake. I accept the one week because I am sure- - - with house hunting, etc., the other week will be worked in here and there.

Now as to the percentage above billings or bonus arrangement. This drawing account sounds nice but it also sounds like a special favor. I think we should just go to work and not even discuss this type of thing until the end of the year. I say this, first, because we do not know how big a pie there will be to cut - - and secondly, I think by the end of the year we will be able to see how much if any of the bonus I have earned. By this I mean, I want to know that I have really helped WRS and feel that I have earned a bonus or share of the profits. I'll tell you right now I do plan to be eligible for the bonus and plan to earn it.

You are right that we will probably need some financial help on furniture and clothes for me. I think, and would feel better, if we could work out a little loan on these items. I remember you helped T & D by loaning them money and letting them pay back a saving account in your name. Bev and I feel this would be much fairer to you and the business and we would feel like we were doing it a little more on our own.

I really am ready to return. I have, a little on purpose, tried to not get too excited in the past. This because the months would have gone much slower and too – because I am the kind that has to do the best job possible on anything I do (even if it's being Administrative Officer for the Finley AF Station). But, now I can see the dream - - I am ready. I have been thinking WRS - - and if not making constructive progress, at least conditioning the old mind for the challenge ahead. I saw in the paper today that the Fargo-Moorhead Sales Executive Club is having a special meeting, Saturday, April 9th - - open to the public for $10. I think I will drive down. It's an all-day affair with four speakers. One I heard at the S*E in Indpls. Herb True. The other three sound equally interesting.

I really have been long in answering your letter but I have been writing and rewriting this for a week and mentally long before that. I plan to get a letter off to Kitty in the next few days also.

In particular, Mom, I would like to comment on your closing paragraph. We do owe a great deal to Dad - - and I am also very, very proud of my mother and what she has done. I am also happy that this extra special business woman wants me for a partner–a real partner and not a son that has to be put somewhere in the business. I am also happy that I got a girl like Bev who does believe in me and wants me to be a success. We're so glad- - We are happy with our choice.

Love,
Frank

Note to Jack, Age 9 Months

In November 1988, Tommie penned a note to her grandson Steve Walker, although she addressed it to his infant son in a clever tactic to convey a message to the father while creating a keepsake for her great-grandson. Tommie's life-long belief in the importance of gratitude and her unfailing love of family combined to make her note and the poem enclosed especially meaningful.

Tommie Walker Anderson
535 B Hunters Drive, Carmel, Indiana 46032

November 2, 1988

Dear Baby Jack,

Here's a very special Thanksgiving gift for you. In going through a box of "Keep Sakes" - I found this poem.

Its years and years old as some day you can tell by its "yellow colored paper".

Andy's framed it for you! – and maybe it's a small "memento" for your Dad to read from time to time – I've living proof you have and will continue to have a Dad Steve whose followed in his Dad's way of walking – and this can easily go back to previous generations! Frank's Dad (my Dad for me).

Sometimes I forget to express my thanks to all my very special family who give me so much love and respect, but in my heart, in my many Big "8 – 0" years of living, no other "part" of me (EVER) means as much as family – and now – I've you and other great G-C added!

Your 80 "Momo"

Walk a Little Plainer, Daddy

Walk a little plainer, Daddy, said
a little boy so frail, I'm following
in your footsteps and I don't
want to fail. Sometimes your
steps are very plain, sometimes
they are hard to see, so walk
a little plainer, Daddy,
for you are leading me.

I know that once you walked this
way, many years ago, and what
you did along the way I'd really
like to know, for sometimes when
I am tempted, I don't know what
to do; so walk a little plainer,
Daddy, for I must follow you.

Some day when I'm grown up,
you are like I want to be; then I
will have a little boy who will
want to follow me, and I would
want to lead him right, and help
him to be true; so walk a little
plainer, Daddy,
for I must follow you.

Let us lift our hearts in prayer
On this Thanksgiving
Day for the bountiful harvests
That have blessed this land
Since the first Thanksgiving...

We wish you and yours
A Happy Thanksgiving!

Remembrances of Sallie Walker Gindling

As noted in this biography, Tommie was a doting grandmother and considered the birth of each of her grandchildren an event worthy of celebration. But her loving, nurturing practices extended to other children in the family, as her great-niece Sallie Walker Gindling relates in this remembrance. And her conduct served as an example to younger generations of how to carry on the family traditions.

From Sallie Walker Gindling (in 2013 letter)

"When I hear her name mentioned I immediately think fun, big smile and sweet, but what drew me most to my Aunt Tommie was the way she treated me, never as a child, always as an equal and she sought me out, which was a different experience for me as a child.

"When I was 8, Aunt Tommie called my Mom and invited me to Adventure land to play putt putt and to spend the night. I had always loved my Aunt Tommie so of course I agreed. We had a great time, putting was not necessarily one of her strengths, but she had just as much fun as I did, giggling right along with an 8 year old on a wonderful summer evening.

"During the night I woke up in an unfamiliar room and unfamiliar bed, and instead of panicking I just thought things through. I knew I wasn't in my own room, so I had to be in the room of a friend. I had spent the night with two of my friends Karen and Shelly before so one by one I went through the features of the room I was in and compared them to both Karen and Shelly's room, but nothing matched. And then I remembered, I was in the home of a friend, my Aunt Tommie.

"When I was 14 Aunt Tommie and Andy were having my family and her sons Frank and Tom's families over to her condo for dinner. Aunt Tommie called my Mom to see if I wanted to come over early and hang out; of course I jumped at the chance. We swam, we cooked, we laughed and when everyone else arrived at dinner time I felt special. Everyone else was there for dinner,

but I got to be with Aunt Tommie all day, I felt a bond with her the rest of the evening that I knew no one else had at that exact point in time. I think that is what made it so wonderful to be around Aunt Tommie, she made you feel special."

Camp Lively Speech to Horizon Clubs Members (Circa 1947)

Two things that came naturally to Tommie – talking with and nurturing people – made her an especially engaging speaker. When she addressed a group of young girls at Camp Lively in 1948, Tommie not only expressed her own belief in living with a spirit of gratitude, but did so in a warm, inviting way that helped her connect quickly and easily with her audience. In relating how they could help others as a hobby, she masterfully illustrated how doing so would benefit not just those they helped but also the girls themselves. When she prepared this speech, Tommie probably drew on what she'd learned first-hand about how to relate to adolescents: her own sons were then about that age, and at 40, she wasn't so far removed from being a teenager herself.

It's really a thrill to be here this morning – to meet and talk with you. I consider it a very fine honor to have been invited to talk with you. There's something about being in the great outdoors, having the opportunity of being near the trees, fall flowers – the river – things that God has given us which causes one to think a lot of thoughts that one otherwise would not take the time to consider. The subject given me and the one I shall attempt to pass along to you is -

"HELPING OTHERS AS A HOBBY"

What better subject could one discuss this morning – for where else but at Camp does one find so many little chores to be done and it never seems enough to do just what is assigned to us but, rather – the extra things – the things we weren't asked to do but we do them is what really makes a happily remembered Outing - - - so let's settle down and talk about you!

When I say "you", I mean you and other young women like you. For while we are talking about you who are represented here this morning, we are also talking of young women in other Horizon Clubs in Pennsylvania - New York – Alabama – California, for, as I have traveled from coast to coast these past few years, I've found young women are pretty much alike – your problems –

your opportunities are as great in one community as another and, too, - our opportunities, our achievements are where we as individuals make them and the part of the country makes little, if any, difference.

It's true – after one has developed talents, you may feel the need to move to a faraway City where these skills and talents are in greater demand, but basic qualities and ingredients of your own personality and character must come within yourself.

So, whether you plan in your future – a business career – or a professional career – whether you plan to become a full-time homemaker – or combine the two, as many of us have done, you will find you're three (3) people all in one!

For you are:

1. The person others think you are
2. You're the kind of person you think you are, and
3. You're what you really are!!

So let's not be afraid to face it!!

In the first place, no matter who you are, someone looks to you for encouragement – for understanding, for advice and counsel and to you for love! That person may be your kid brother or sister – it may be your father, or mother or grandmother – it may be your favorite friend, either a boy or a girl – but it's someone you don't want to let down – you want them – above all other things in life, to respect and approve your every deed – and your judgment.

That's where helping others as a Hobby can be fun – you know closeness is a feeling. That's why you may be geographically miles away from the very ones you are nearest to in heart and soul – just as sometimes total strangers live under the same roof.

Let's be specific.

Let's start with you in Camp today, or better still, in your home – you may not realize the importance of the little things of daily living that can make others around you happy – or sad – how your reaction to say the way your hair looks – it's a mess – you talk about it – until you'd think it was someone else's fault – or maybe your skirt doesn't hang quite right – or your sweater was stretched out wrong when you put on. Maybe dinner's late – you don't have time to eat so you put everyone else around you in a tiffie because you only have 20 minutes to eat and dress – and so you take 18 of the 20 to get ready and 2 minutes to eat, leaving everyone around you feeling like a bomb shell had just passed through, when you've walked out the door. Try- - - and it will come easy, if you think of others – allowing time to be kind – time to say thank you – even to your family.

Hearts, like doors, open with ease,
With very tiny little keys.
But don't forget that two of these –
Are "Thank you" and "If you Please"

Actually you do hold a key, that unlocks hearts, if you stay calm and collected – thinking clearly and when you think of others you become an Executive in your own rights for you make others feel important. Happy women make happy homes – happy homes make happy families – happy families make stronger communities – and happy, powerful nations. Some day in the very near future, you will be that key person in your own home.

Strength, you know, flows through responsibility.

Last Sunday afternoon, I visited the State School for Girls at Clermont. I am a sponsor of a Camp Fire Group there. – and as I sat in the Chapel listening to their own choir sing the words, "You must believe – it will bring you gladness – if you don't believe you'll have a life of sadness" and a lump – a big lump came into my throat and knowing the background, the environment of the homes from which most to these girls have come, I felt a great responsibility

fall on my own shoulders. The feeling was one – well, just as if weights had been added to me. That weight that if I gave of myself – I could lift those weights for they were feelings – I could and can, as a Camp Fire Sponsor, help those girls believe in themselves by my believing in them, listening to their small talk about their duties, about the grounds, giving them encouragement in words and a smile – I could, just as you could here at camp, help them have "helping others as a hobby."

After Chapel I visited some of the Cottages where the girls live – I praised their tidiness where it was justifiable – one girl had new shoes to show me – another was going before the Parole Board the next day – she was shaking with fright – I took time to talk with her. Still another girl was going outside, after 27 months in school, she was being placed in a home – frightened indeed she was!! I promised to write her. With another, I talked over plans for our Halloween Party – oh! – such wonderful moments those were. For whom? For the girls, I hope a little bit more than anyone of them can feel someone cares about them. I've gained happiness from them all, - helping others can be a hobby for I can hardly wait until Monday night when I am privileged to go back to the school and meet with their Committee to plan our Halloween Party – that one night they can dress up and walk in military style across the Campus to the old school building where we'll play games, eat popcorn, and bob apples until 8:30 P.M. Last summer, returning from the West Coast on the Super Chief train – Santa Fe's finest – I made the acquaintance of a beautiful young movie and TV star. (I was doing a survey on the train so I had an opportunity to talk with her often). The girl had entered Northwestern University, then was "discovered" and left school at the end of her freshman year for Hollywood. What was she like – what was she wearing – as she was photographed in various poses – in front of the train, in the dining room, on the rear platform – well, she was wearing tailored, simple clothes at all times. She was sweet and natural – unaffected – and who was she looking out for? Her mother, who was her traveling companion, was short and fat and not very pretty, but she made all of us feel she was very, very proud of her mother and she took time to say "Thank You" to every porter on that train. Why do I tell you all of this – about the girls who haven't had a chance, who, in many cases, because of no fault of their own are paying a price to society - - - and then the

TV Movie star who may seem to have all the breaks - - - so you may say so what? What about me? Those people mean nothing to me – I've got my own problems. It's true you do have your own problems. I have mine. You have your own life to lead – I have mine – but no one lives in the world without helping or hurting others. Without giving of oneself – What kind of person are you? –

We must watch what we think
Each minute, all day;
And pull out the weed thoughts
And throw them away
And plant loving seed thoughts
So thick in a row
That there will not be room
For weed thoughts to grow

Speech to JAC – Cincinnati

By the time she spoke to an advertising club in Cincinnati in 1952, Tommie had well over a decade of experience in market research. She was a pioneer – a woman who founded and owned a business and was now the sole breadwinner for her family. In every way, she had earned the right to portray herself as an expert and an entrepreneur. But in this speech, Tommie describes her company in the most modest terms, begins by relating anecdotes from her childhood and asserts that she has the "privilege" of working with her clients. Then deftly, and with characteristic humor, she leads her audience to their own clear conclusion that she is a knowledgeable, capable, and successful professional. When she ends by insisting she might put them all to sleep, one imagines her audience silently objecting: her speech probably left many of her listeners wanting more.

Delivered October 29, 1952

I'm very happy to be here this evening, especially so because it isn't every speaker that is invited back a second year. Of course, I didn't appear before you last year and that is the only reason for my being here tonight. But, truthfully, there are no groups of people with whom I'd rather talk than those in advertising or related fields. Perhaps some of that feeling comes from my being the B.D. (broken down) Secretary of the Indianapolis Ad Club for the past five years, plus an officer in the A.F.A.'s 5th District which, incidentally, takes in the Advertiser's Club of Cincinnati and where many warm and personal friendships have been formed. But, I am sure the real reason and practical one is my interest in advertising men and women and because I work every day with them in agencies and sales and research departments of manufacturers and retail establishments, so it is as much my life to be conducting a copy pre-test or helping plan a sales campaign as it is to find out why Mrs. Jones prefers the chip type soap flakes and when Mrs. Smith, who lives right next door, wouldn't think of using anything but detergents.

Well, let's get down to what I'm to talk about tonight. It's for sure I've

nothing to sell nor promote, it is for sure I cannot forecast the future of the advertising business, and so I'd like to put it to you this way. Let's just talk about marketing and advertising in general and in a very informal manner. I'd like telling you some of the very interesting problems that I have been privileged to work with and about some of the very delightful people I've met.

All right! First let me define marketing research. I say it's proving or disproving an assumption. Simple, isn't it?

There's a story told of an old African Chief who centuries ago wanted to tax his subjects but he had no basis upon which to establish this tax so he called his priests together and they decided that the next good harvest year they would ask the subjects to bring tokens in thanks for their many blessings; for each bushel of wheat they could bring a white stone, for each bushel of corn they could bring a black stone, and for each baby lamb they could bring a shell and so on by this method the Chief would know the amount that each of his subjects should be taxed. Now, I'm sure that the old Chief did not consider this market research nor were his subjects aware of the Chief's plans, but whatever its origin was we do know that market research has grown steadily both in concept and in use and, today we find in business whether you have a service to offer or a product selling for 5 cents or $5,000.00, you have a marketing problem, and immediately arises the questions, What will I sell? What shall I advertise? What shall I manufacture? When and Where and How Much should I sell my services or products for and who will buy them, and lastly, what is my competition in this field?

Now this leads right into the types of work that we do in helping business to determine these answers to these thought-provoking questions. I say "we" because I have a small market research organization in Indianapolis and serve primarily the Indianapolis shopping area. In addition, I am Central Regional Manager of S-D Surveys, Inc. of New York, and it is thru working with them that I am privileged to study marketing and advertising at a national level. Suppose you're selling an item like soft drinks, candy bars, bread or coffee – the kind of item that is sold to a potential market

of millions of consumers. Then your need for market research becomes a much greater one because yours is an ever changing market. Whereas the Company or individual who is selling a product to a few dozen customers such as an industrial company, say one manufacturing road machinery – their market is not a rapidly changing one and therefore their need for market research is not as great.

Let's be specific and start our minds thinking of the many changes in the food stores. It would probably be difficult for most of you in this room to believe that self-service super-markets weren't always in existence, yet in the span of time of my own homemaking duties, we've come from the general, clerk-type store to the self-serving kind which are now almost back to the general store type so far as merchandise is concerned, for one can buy neck ties, men's underwear, women's hose, and children's toys as well as pay your utility bills right along with purchasing the weekly groceries and, too, it's a 24-hour's service basis.

Now the customer makes the decision himself on what he wants to buy and if he hasn't made it up in advance it's a manufacturer's last chance to get him to buy his brand by having a more attractive package and at a better price than his competitor, and of course he must follow thru at the point of sale so that his product is getting the best space to be seen on the shelf. In the olden days, I could say in my grandmother's days, but I don't have to really go back that far for I can say as a child I remember riding in the old family carriage to the general store and it was always such fun, while my mother was talking over each item with the storekeeper, to go along the front of the counter and look in all the barrels, for displayed along the front of the counter was always a barrel of white sugar, one with flour, another filled with crackers, and while if we wanted, say, cider vinegar, kerosene or potatoes I'd get to go to the back of the store with the owner and there'd always be the store cat that slept during the day and served as night watchman at night, because packaging was almost unheard of for food items 30, 40, years ago. I can also recall seeing the old City slicker with his derby hat, striped vest, cutaway coat out from the mail order house in Chicago, standing around, watching what my mother was choosing in yard goods. Was she buying the bright

red, green and yellow calicos – that would be sure to fade in the sun, or was she sticking to the old tried-and-true gray and blue percales that she knew wouldn't fade when they were washed in her harsh homemade lye soap? Of course, the big city salesman was doing a market research study, although he didn't know that he was, that is they didn't call it that and he was a bit too late because now, market research is done in advance of the product on the market and, in most cases, is continued to be studied for improvements so that you, the customer, may get a better buy for your dollar. And, while I'm recalling those childhood days in the general store, I should mention the political polls that were taken at that time – since it's so timely here a few days before election and in Indianapolis tomorrow and Friday we will be interviewing on the last Public Opinion Poll before election - - - I'll tell you how it was done in my childhood days. But, while my mother was buying the household needs my father could be found over on the other side of the store by the big stove talking over the coming election with other men in the community and sure as anything, the town's best politician could be found in this same spot from time to time asking the same questions, "Who're you going to vote for?" "Who you think's going to be our next President?" And so we might think that all of a sudden we're having lots of surveys and that they are new but we can keep recalling back and know that they've been going on all the time – they just didn't have the name Market Research. And it only goes back to what I said a few minutes ago that Market Research has grown in concept and use. I'd like to quickly tell you some specific food studies that we are doing right now – this week, I mean. One of our staff is in Kansas City setting up a cracker job. Now it isn't enough for ordinary crackers, just to come in an ordinary box, but it's got to be packaged in lots of little boxes inside of a big box, and inside of the little boxes, they gotta be divided up into cellophane packages, so that you don't have to eat stale crackers anymore. But think what a problem that is for the cracker people. They gotta know how many crackers you usually eat at one time, and how often you feel like crackers, and whether they're salty enough or too salty, and if they're thin enough to satisfy you.

Yesterday, in our office, and this is no exaggeration at all – and remember we are not an advertising agency but rather, strictly marketing service, and

around our office going at a very high speed were a number of interviewers – one was carrying in boxes of dry cereal and setting up that job ready to start this morning with families who regularly eat dry cereal for breakfast – still another interviewer was on the phone lining up church and school and sorority groups to taste test three brands of coffee, which meant she had to have identical coffee makers and hot plates, and cups and saucers. She had to plan that groups could be interviewed, yet their opinions must individually recorded so that they would not be influenced by one another. Another group of interviewers were making a cake taste, taking dozens of cakes off an early morning flight at the airport in preparation for getting the opinions of housewives. Still another interviewer was closing up a job on shampoos and after-shaving lotion while I met personally with a client from New York and was setting up a dentifrice study, and the other half of my day spent with a Professor of Marketing of one of our leading Universities who was establishing a farm panel. These I tell you about not to attempt to impress you with how busy we are but rather that you may have a better understanding of today's scope of business problems and how you, the customer, are the judges and the jury rather than the old time way of the President and the Chairman of the Board making these decisions, tho I hasten to say market research surveys should be used only as a guide in executive thinking and never take the place completely of the wise judgment of key people.

Now, I'd like to tell you about a manufacturing company who came to us about the middle of August. This company manufactures kitchen cabinets and they had the idea they would like to manufacture a new type lavatory, known as the Lavinette. This is the type that provides a place for storage beneath the bowl proper and at the side giving you counter space for shaving and makeup. But before they had the expense of setting up a production line of machinery and materials, an outlay of some $25,000.00, they wanted to know what the housewives thought of the idea and so the account executive of the agency and the sales manager came to me with the two usual intelligent questions, "Can you do a survey for us day before yesterday?" And, "How much will it cost?" So I gave the usual stock answer, by saying, "You wouldn't walk into a doctor's office for the first time and say, doctor

can you operate on me and what will it cost" before you know whether or not you even need an operation, would you". Well it's the same difference here, so we arranged a meeting to talk it over and for me to see the dummy model they had prepared, of wood and porcelain. From this original meeting I outlined the objectives and prepared an outline of a questionnaire and after many lengthy telephone calls, a couple of meetings and a lapse of about two weeks' time, we had revised and improved our questionnaire to our satisfaction and we were ready to talk to women living in moderate type homes to get their opinion. But this called for further planning on our part because we could not expect the results would amount to much if we just asked the women what they thought or we showed them a picture of something they had never seen before. So we turned a portion of our office into a modern showroom, displaying our client's proposed model along with well-known brands of the new lavinette and the old, conventional type that fastens to the wall. We had women come singularly and view this display, at the same time we interviewed her on the various features of the product. What did she think of the color, the height, the handles, the storage space, and from these opinions expressed, our client today is producing the new bathroom fixture.

Now, of course, that's only starting on the company's marketing problems because there are distribution problems involving distributors of bathroom fixtures, shipping costs, and many, many others along with briefing their salesmen, but the guessing has been taken out of the beginning of this new product and production is under way.

Another household change that has taken a decided new look are the windows in our homes and the treatment of same. The old green roll-type blind has almost faded out of the picture, and has been replaced with draw/ drape and /or venetian blinds.

(tell window treatment story)

Skipping around from food stores, drug items, house furnishings, let's talk about your shoes, your hose, your hats? Does the occasion for which you

plan to wear your new clothes influence you in the amount that you pay for them? What about your underwear – do you insist on a specific brand? At the close of World War II, the manufacturers of men's shorts realized they had problems. It seems that most all the fellows coming out of the Marine and Navy, and Army too for that matter, brought along enough jockey shorts to keep themselves and all their brothers for at least a couple of years' time. This in itself presented a problem because the manufacturers of men's underwear had lost direct contact with their customers, having been selling to just one, namely: Uncle Sam. And then, too, the manufacturers had discontinued certain models and styles during the war and they wondered if they start making these again, would there be a market for them? And so, we had a run on surveys about men's underwear.

(tell story about underwear)

At first like deodorants, personal hygiene and laxatives, the subject of men's underwear seemed almost too personal to discuss with total strangers, but before the study was over, we not only found it easy to show pictures of actual models of each style at the same time pointing out the features of the garment, why we even could tell what kind of underwear a man wore by the way he walked down the street.

Well, what you eat, what you wear, what you have in your home, is all important but so is it important when you travel, where you go and why.

(tell about transportation studies, bus, planes, and trains – tell human interest stories about train trip)

And even to what side of the street you walk on. (T-V store)
Utilities are not to be overlooked and even monopolies must know what people think –

(tell telephone story)

Well, where do we find these people – how do we choose our samples, (3 – 4

times) here are questions that I'm asked most frequently. (Tell them) And probably the next question asked most frequently is "Are people nice to us or glad to be interviewed?"

I could go on for hours here and have you all put to sleep and still not tell you all of the studies that we are privileged to be a part of in a year's time, but market research is thought of as being stuffy and tedious and boring and I'd like you to know that I think it's just the opposite and you are responsible for my feeling that way because you are a very important person and your opinion counts.

Tommie's Poem for "The Gals"

Before her company had a legal name, her business was referred to simply as "Tommie and the girls," she told an interviewer. Throughout the decades she launched and grew Walker Research, Tommie remained devoted to her employees and associates, and they returned it in kind. Tommie's light-hearted but clearly heartfelt poem for "the gals" is evidence of the special relationship she had with the women who conducted surveys, made phone calls, tabulated findings and generally ran operations. If, as one family member observed, Tommie "collected people," she did so with special enthusiasm when it came to the women of Walker Research.

February 23, 1968

To All the Gals who "sang" me the clever card song
Smelling of "Marcel Rochas" and "Lanvin", I'll try not to go wrong
But just you wait until I return
For in South America I may just learn
What Spaniards are like by night and by day
Do they really fight bulls or with American women play?
So do brace yourself for one day when I get back
You can forget your sandwich in paper sack
And come for a hot ham on a bun
While I tell you about my two week run
Among competition of forty other widows pretty and rich
To get attention I may turn into a devil of a bitch (Pardon ladies)
But this you can count on, even make a bet
Viewing the Andes and visiting Casinos I'll return a member of the Jet Set
So while I am gone - - do this for yourselves –
Raise your glass, to a toast, -- to
What I know (all of you)
Are the greatest Gals!

Tommie

Praying Hands

For decades, Tommie was an active public speaker. She never promoted herself or overtly sought speaking engagements; rather, her reputation alone resulted in countless requests for her to address professional, civic, and youth organizations. Frequently she spoke about her field – that of market research – and often about community service, another favorite subject. But she also spoke about her spiritual life, eloquently expressed in her reflections on the painting "Praying Hands" by Albrecht Dürer. This surviving outline for her presentation is probably all she needed to keep her on track, for she reportedly spoke many times on the subject, primarily to church-related groups. In the painting she found a symbol for much of what she held sacred in her life: gratitude, humility, the value of honest labor and, of course, love of family.

Tommie's Speech Outline – Praying Hands Presentation

Accept Introduction
Thanks for inviting
"Hands" – your hands – Jesus hands
We take for granted hands of those we meet in a day's time
Look at your hands (Think) – In one day's time
As I recall my yesterday. Hands – maybe you'd like to recall the hand that touched your life yesterday – perhaps more than touched mine.

1. Maintenance – young man at condo saw me – opened the door – hands full – "Let me get the car door for you"
2. Car wash – many hands
3. Card shop – saleslady on hands and knees looking for a special card
4. Florist shop – here two ladies hands helped me – a small vase – one yellow rose – for a shut in friend
5. Friend's home – stopped by the friend's home – companion let me in – hands – rose to my friend – "Let me smell" – hands
6. To the bank – safety deposit – hands – then manager shows pictures of new baby
7. Home – find unexpected out of town guests – glad to see – entwined hands

8. Restaurant – nearby – fast food bar – many hands – hostess – bus boy – waitress – cook – cashier
9. Grocery store – pick up grapes to take to my 89 year old sister in nursing home – many hands
10. Nursing home – a nurses aid was helping my sister to the bathroom – a maid was cleaning her room – a nurse came with medication and to position my sister in her bed – another patient called to me to come see her birthday cards
11. On way back home – I observed an accident – a policeman was directing traffic with his hands – on down a daddy was teaching his little daughter how to ride a new bike – boys were playing ball on an empty lot
12. Typist – a dear friend who types for me brought to me finished work – work of her hands
13. To the post office – weighing metered postage stamps – door opened by gentleman – at my age one gets doors opened easily
14. Home at last – to use my hands for many tasks
15. Our hands we take for granted – I wonder how many of us remember to give thanks for our hands? I don't – but putting this talk together today – I'm a lot more conscious of hands that work for me.

    I understand much better the meaning of "Jesus Hands" as mentioned in the bible. What changes in people's lives took place when Jesus touched them?
16. 199 times – hands are mentioned! Why – do millions of people visit the "Holy Land"?

    Because Jesus touched it – in the 412 chapter – 95th verse of Psalms – it says "In his hands are the places of the earth"
17. Psalms – 92nd verse – Chapters 1 – 2 – 4
    It's good to give thanks to the Lord – To sing praises to thy name – To declare thy steadfast love in the morning

    And the faithfulness of nite – for thou oh Lord – hast made me glad by thy work – at of thy hands I sing praise

18. And here's an example of hands giving thanks to the Lord (Show Picture)
19. Back in 1508 a young German artist was commissioned by a wealthy man to do a word carved alter piece for his church. Later in 1674 the church was destroyed by fire and only Durer's sketches and work sheets remained – from there – praying hands was painted – some say they are the artists hands – others say they are his mother's – whoever hands these painting depict – let us remember – hands – touching hands work – hand can express our love for one another

Now – may we hold hands with one another as we repeat the Lord's Prayer?

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When Tommie Cole was born in 1908 on a farm in central Indiana, she statistically had a one-in-five chance of not living to her first birthday. But Tommie made a habit of beating the odds. With only a high school education and while rearing two young children in pre-World War II Indianapolis, she founded a company at her kitchen table. In an era when only 10 percent of married women with young children worked, Tommie was signing up new clients and traveling on business, alone, across the United States. And whereas only about 12 percent of family-owned businesses survive to the third generation, the company she started in 1939 has remained in the capable hands of her son and grandson. In 2014, that company – Walker – remains a leader in market research and information, celebrating its 75th anniversary. The inspiring story of how Tommie Cole Walker Anderson became one of the most successful and respected leaders in her field, while holding fast to her "family comes first" philosophy, is the embodiment of the American dream.